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THE
Life of God
IN THE
Soul of Man.

OR,

The *Nature* and *Excellency* of the Christian Religion; With the Method of attaining the Happiness it proposes.

AND

An *Account* of the *Beginnings* and *Advances* of a *Spiritual Life*.

In Two LETTERS written to Persons of Honour.

Eph.4.18. *Alienated from the Life of God.*
Gal.2.20. *I am Crucified with Christ; Nevertheless I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.*
Rom.8.14. *For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the Sons of God.*

LONDON,
Printed for *Charles Smith* at the Angel near the Inner-Temple-Gate in *Fleet-street*; And *William Jacob* at the *Black-Swan* next *Bernards Inn* in *Holbourn*, 1677.

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THE
Preface.

THis Age grones under ſuch a ſurcharge of new Books, that though the many good ones lately publiſhed do much ballance the great ſwarms of ill, or at leaſt needleſs ones; Yet all men complain of the unneceſſary charge and trouble many new Books put them to: the truth of it is, Printing is become a Trade, and the Preſſes muſt be kept going, ſo that if it were but to ſhuffle out an ill Book, a man may be tempted to keep them at work.

And for Books of Devotion and Piety, we have ſeen ſo many excellent ones of

late in our own Language, that perhaps no Age or Language can ſhew the like; in theſe the Chriſtian Religion is propoſed in its own True and Natural Colours, and reſcued from thoſe falſe Repreſentations many are apt to make of it: As if it conſiſted either in External Performances, or in Mechanical Heats of the Fancy, or in embracing ſome Opinions or Intereſts. It is and can be nothing elſe but a Deſign to make us like God both in the Inward temper of our Minds, and in our whole deportment and converſation. For this end did Chriſt both live and dye; this he taught by his Diſcourſes, and diſcovered in his Life. He died that he might take away ſin, not only or chiefly to procure our Pardon, which was done by him for a further end; that a Univerſal Indempnity being offered through his Death, all mankind might be thereby encouraged to enter into a courſe of holy Obedience with all poſſible advantages, having the hopes of Endleſs happineſs, and the fears of Eternal miſeries before them: having the cleareſt Rule, and the moſt unblemiſhed Example propoſed to them; being

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also sure of constant Inward supplies to support and strengthen their endeavours, and an Unerring Providence to direct all things that concern them. Nor are there any Precepts in this whole Doctrine, whose fitness and true excellency, besides the Authority of the Law-giver, has not been fully made good. And the truth of the Principles of Natural Religion, and of the Revelation of the Council of God in Scripture was never since Miracles ceased, demonstrated with fuller and clearer evidence then in our Age, both for stopping the mouths of all daring Hectors, and for silencing the secret doubtings of more Inquisitive Minds. And though so grave a subject should have been rather prejudiced then adorned by Artificial and forced strains of Wit or Eloquence, yet as our Language was never chaster than now, so these Subjects have been handled with all the proper decencies of easie Wit and good Language.

But after all this, into what a torrent of regrates and lamentations must we break out, when we consider the Age we live in. For few do either believe or

reflect on those great things. And as if there were a general Conspiracy against God and Religion, how does the greater part among us break loose from all the ties and bonds of that Yoke that is light and easie, and inslave themselves to many base and hurtful lusts and passions: And are not satisfied with being as bad as they can be, but desire that all the world may esteem them such, and glory in their shame; and inhance their guilt by turning factors for hell, studying to corrupt all about them. This sad prospect must needs deeply affect all that either truly love God, or have a tender compassion for the Souls of Men, and will certainly set them to their secret mournings and wrestlings with God to avert the heavy Judgments that seem to hang over our heads; and that he may of his great mercy turn the hearts of the froward and disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

And till God arise and bless his Gospel with more of this success, nothing could be such an effectual Mean for convincing the World of the Truth and Excellence of our most holy Faith, as that those who

who profeſs and embrace it did walk in all the ſtrictneſs of a moſt holy Innocent and Exemplary Life; keeping the due mean between the affectation of moroſsneſs and hypocriſie, and the levities of irreligion and folly. This is the only argument that is wanting to convince the World of the truth of our Religion; all people are more wrought on by lively Examples ſet before their eyes, than by any diſcourſes or reaſonings how ſtrong or convincing ſoever. The one is more eaſily apprehended, and leaves a deeper Impreſſion then the other, which does not prevail on us till by frequent and ſerious reflections we be ſatisfied about them, and when we hear any one ſpeak well, we are not aſſured he thinks as he ſays, but do often ſuſpect he is ſhewing his Wit or Eloquence to our coſt, that he may perſwade us into ſome Opinions that may prove gainful to himſelf: but when we ſee a man purſuing a conſtant courſe of holineſs in the moſt painful Inſtances which do moſt prejudice his Viſible Intereſts, we have all reaſon to believe he is in good earneſt perſwaded of thoſe truths which engage him to ſuch a Converſation.

After the Ages of Miracles, nothing prevailed so much on the World as the exemplary Lives and the painful Martyrdoms of the Christians, which made all sorts of people look with amazement on that Doctrine that wrought so powerfully on all ranks, and did raise persons of the meanest Educations and Dispositions, and of the weaker Sex and tenderer Age, to do and suffer beyond what their greatest Heroes and most celebrated Philosophers had ever done. And in those days the Apologists for the Christian Religion did appeal to the lives of the Christians to prove their Doctrine holy, concluding that there could be nothing but good in that Doctrine that made all its Votaries such. But alas! when we write Apologies we must appeal from the Lives of most that pretend to be Religious, to the Rules and Precepts of our most holy Faith, and must decline the putting the trial of Christianity upon that issue; and though thanks be to God there are beautiful and shining Instances of the power of Religion among us, yet alas there be too few of them, and they lie hid in a vast mixture of others that are naught.

The

The two great prejudices the Tribe of Libertines and Ruffians are hardned in againſt Religion, are 1. *that they do not ſee thoſe that profeſs they believe the truths of Religion, live like men that do ſo in good earneſt: and I have known them ſay, That did they believe the great God governed all humane affairs, and did know all we do, and were to call us to an account for it, and reward or puniſh accordingly in an endleſs and inchangeable ſtate, they could not live as the greater part of Chriſtians do, but would preſently renounce all the vanities and follies of this World, and give themſelves up wholly to a holy and exact courſe of life. The other prejudice is, That for thoſe in whoſe deportment they find little to blame, yet they have great cauſe of ſuſpecting there is ſome hid deſign under it, which will break out when there is a fit opportunity for it. And they conclude, that ſuch perſons are either ſecretly as bad as others, only diſguiſing it by a decenter deportment, or that all they do is a force upon themſelves for ſome ſecret end or other. And if there be ſome on whom they can*

faſten neither of theſe (as it is hardly poſſible but one that is reſolved to poſſeſs himſelf with prejudices, will either find or pretend ſome colours for them) then at laſt they judge ſuch perſons are moroſs and ſullen, and find either from the diſpoſition of their Body or their Education as much ſatisfaction in their ſour gravity, as others do in all their wanton and extravagant follies.

Theſe prejudices, eſpecially the firſt, muſt be diſcuſſed by real Confutations, and the ſtrict conduct of our lives, as well as our grave and ſolemn devotions muſt ſhew we are over-ruled by a ſtrong belief of the authority of that Law which governs our whole actions. Nor will our abſtaining from groſs Immoralities be argument enough, ſince even decency may prevail ſo far (though alas never ſo little as now when fools do ſo generally mock at the ſhame and ſenſe of ſin, as if that were only the peeviſhneſs of a ſtrict and illiberal education) but we muſt abſtain from all thoſe things that are below the gravity of a Chriſtian, and ſtrengthen a corrupt generation in their Vices. What ſignifies endleſs gaming, eſpecially

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when joined with ſo much avarice and paſſion as accompany it generally, but that people know not to diſpoſe of their time, and therefore muſt play it away idly at beſt. What ſhall be ſaid of thoſe conſtant crouds at Plays (eſpecially when the Stage is ſo defiled with Atheiſm, and all ſorts of Immorality) but that ſo many perſons know not how to fill up ſo many hours of the day, and therefore this contrivance muſt ſerve to waſt them, and they muſt feed their eyes and ears with debauching objects, which will either corrupt their Minds, or at leaſt fill their Imaginations with very unpleaſant and hateful repreſentations. As if there were not a ſufficient growth of ill thoughts ready to ſpring up within us, but this muſt be cultivated and improved by Art. What are thoſe perpetual viſits in the giving or receiving of which moſt ſpend the better half of the time in which they are awake: And how trifling at beſt, but generally how hurtful the diſcourſes that paſs in thoſe viſits are, I leave to thoſe who live in them to declare. How much time is ſpent in vain dreſſing, (not to mention thoſe in-

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decent Arts of Painting, and other contrivances to corrupt the World) and all either to feed vanity or kindle luſt. And after all this, many that live in theſe things deſire to be thought good Chriſtians, are conſtant to Church and frequent at the Sacrament. What wonder then if our Libertines ſeeing ſuch things in perſons that paſs for very Religious, and having wit enough to diſcern that ſuch a deportment does not agree with the belief of an account to be made for all we do, conclude they do not believe that, otherwiſe they would not behave themſelves as they do. Some failures now and then could not juſtifie ſuch an Inference, but a habit and courſe of thoſe things is an argument againſt the reality of that belief which I confeſs I cannot anſwer.

But when we have got ſo far as to eſcape thoſe things that are blame-worthy, it is far from being all we muſt aim at; it is not enough not to be ill; we muſt be good, and expreſs it in all the inſtances which our ſtate of life and circumſtances call for. Doing good to all, forgiving injuries, comforting all in trouble, ſupply-

ſupplying the neceſſities of the poor; but chiefly ſtudying to advance the good of all peoples ſouls as much as we can; improving whatever Intereſt we have in any perſons to this end of raiſing them to a ſenſe of God and another Life; The chief motive we offer to this, being the unaffected ſtrictneſs of our own deportment, which will make all our diſcourſes have the greater weight and force in them.

And for the other prejudices, it is true, there is no fence or ſecurity againſt Jealouſie, yet we ought carefully to avoid every thing may be an occaſion of it, as all ſecret converſe with ſuſpected perſons, the doing any thing that without ſin we may forbear, which is ſingular, or may bring a diſ-eſteem on others, or make us be obſerved or talked of: And in a word, to ſhun all forced geſtures, or modes of ſpeech, and every thing that is not native and genuine. For let men think what they will, nothing that is conſtrained can ever become ſo natural, but it will appear loathſome and affected to others: which muſt needs afford matter of jealouſie and diſ-eſteem, eſpecially

ally to all prying and Critical obſervers.

Were there many who did live thus, the Atheiſts would be more convinced, at leaſt more aſhamed and out of countenance then the moſt learned Writings or laboured Sermons will ever make them: Eſpecially if a ſpirit of Univerſal Love and goodneſs did appear more among Chriſtians, and thoſe factions and animoſities were laid aſide, which both weaken the inward vitals of holineſs, and expoſe them to the ſcorn of their Adverſaries, and make them an eaſie prey to every aggreſſor. There is ſcarce a more unaccountable thing to be imagined, then to ſee a Company of Men profeſſing that Religion, a great and main precept whereof is mutual love, forbearance, gentleneſs of ſpirit, and Compaſſion to all ſorts of perſons, and agreeing in all the eſſential parts of that Doctrine, differing only in ſome leſs material and more diſputable things, yet maintain thoſe differences with a Zeal ſo diſproportioned to the value of them, proſecuting all that diſagree from them with all poſſible violence, or if they

they want means to use outward force, with all bitterness of Spirit. This must needs astonish every Impartial beholder, and raise great prejudices against those persons Religious, as made up of Contradictions, professing love, but breaking out in all the acts of hatred.

But the deep sense I have of these things has carried me too far, my design in this Preface being only to Introduce the following Discourse, which was written by a Pious and Learned Countreyman of mine, for the private use of a Noble Friend of his, without the least design of making it more publick. Others seeing it, were much taken both with the Excellent purposes it contained, and the great clearness and pleasantness of the Stile, the natural Method and the shortneß of it, and desired it might be made a more publick good. And knowing some Interest I had with the Author, it was referred to me, whether it should lye in a private Closet, or be let go abroad. I was not long in suspence, having read it over, and the rather knowing so well as I do, that the Author has written

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out nothing here but what he himſelf did well feel and know, and therefore it being a Tranſcript of thoſe divine Impreſſions that are upon his own heart, I hope the Native and unforced genuineneſs of it will both more delight and edifie the Reader. I know thoſe things have been often diſcourſed with great advantages both of Reaſon, Wit and Eloquence, but the more Witneſſes that concurr in ſealing theſe Divine Truths with their Teſtimonies, the more evidence is thereby given.

It was upon this account that the Author having ſeen a Letter written by a Friend of his to a Perſon of great Honour, but of far greater Worth, of the riſe and progreſs of a Spiritual Life (wherein as there were many things which he had not touched ſo in thoſe things of which they both diſcourſe, the harmony was ſo great, that he believed they would mutually ſtrengthen one another) was earneſt with his Friend that both might go abroad together, and the other preſſing him to let his Diſcourſe be publiſhed, he would not yield to it unleſs he granted the ſame conſent for his.

And

And ſo the Reader has both, the one after the other, which he is deſired to peruſe with ſome degrees of the ſame ſeriouſneſs in which they were both penned, and then it is preſumed he will not repent him of his pains.

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THE

ERRATA.

P.23.l.4.for *is* read *are*. p.76.l.20. for *but* r.*when*. p.81.l.ult. after *be* r. *as*.

Page 5.l.8 for *love* r.*have*. p 6.l.19.put a point after *it*, p.16.l.7.for *Imployed* r.*Employed*. p.19.l. 26. for *Calumnits* r.*Calmness*. p.26.l.5.dele *as* and r.*it* after *that*. p.29.l.25.for *forced* r.*formed*.p.59.for *of* r.*as*.

The LIFE of GOD IN *the SOUL of MAN.*

My Dear Friend,

THis deſignation doth give you a Title to all the Endeavours whereby I can ſerve your Intereſts; and your Pious Inclinations do ſo happily conſpire with my Duty, that I ſhall not need to ſtep out of my road to gratifie you; but I may at once perform an office of Friendſhip, and diſcharge an exerciſe of my Function, ſince the advancing of Virtue and Holineſs (which I hope you make your greateſt ſtudy) is the

The Occaſion of this Diſcourſe.

peculiar buſineſs of my Imployment: This therefore is the moſt proper inſtance wherein I can vent my affection, and expreſs my gratitude towards you, and I ſhall not any longer delay the performance of what promiſe I made you to this purpoſe: for though I know you are provided with better helps of this nature, then any I can offer you; nor are you like to meet with any thing here which you knew not before, yet I am hopeful, that what cometh from one whom you are pleaſed to honour with your Friendſhip, and which is more particularly deſigned for your uſe, will be kindly accepted by you, and God's Providence perhaps may ſo direct my thoughts, that ſomething or other may prove uſeful to you. Nor ſhall I doubt your pardon, if for moulding my diſcourſe into the better frame, I lay a low foundation, beginning with the Nature, and Properties of Religion, and all along give ſuch way to my thoughts in the proſecution of the ſubject, as may bring me to ſay many things which were not neceſſary, did I one-

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ly conſider to whom I am writing.

I cannot ſpeak of Religion, but I muſt regrate that among ſo many pretenders to it, ſo few underſtand what it means; ſome placing it in the Underſtanding, in Orthodox Notions and Opinions, and all the account they can give of their Religion, is that they are of this or the other perſwaſion, and have joyn'd themſelves to one of thoſe many Sects whereinto Chriſtendom is moſt unhappily divided: Others place it in the outward man, in a conſtant courſe of external duties, and a model of performances, if they live peaceably with their Neighbours, keep a temperate dyet, obſerve the returns of Worſhip, frequenting the Church, or their Cloſet, and ſometimes extend their hands to the relief of the Poor, they think they have ſufficiently acquitted themſelves: Others again put all Religion in the affections, in rapturous heats, and extatick devotion, and all they aim at, is to pray with paſſion, and think of Heaven with pleaſure, and to be affected with thoſe kinde, and melting

Miſtakes about Religion.

melting expreſſions wherewith they court their Saviour, till they perſwade themſelves that they are mightily in love with him, and from thence aſſume a great confidence of their ſalvation, which they eſteem the chief of Chriſtian Graces. Thus are theſe things which have any reſemblance of Piety, and at the beſt are but means for obtaining it, or particular exerciſes of it, frequently miſtaken for the whole of Religion: nay ſometimes Wickedneſs and Vice pretends to that name; I ſpeak not now of thoſe groſs Impieties wherewith the Heathens were wont to worſhip their Gods, there are but too many Chriſtians who would conſecrate their vices, and hallow their corrupt affections, whoſe rugged humour, and ſullen pride muſt paſs for Chriſtian ſeverity, whoſe fierce wrath, and bitter rage againſt their enemies muſt be called holy zeal, whoſe petulancy toward their Superiours, or rebellion againſt their Governours muſt have the name of Chriſtian courage and reſolution.

What Religion is.

But certainly Religion is quite another

other thing, and they who are acquainted with it, will entertain far different thoughts, and disdain all those shadows and false imitations of it: They know by experience that true Religion is an Union of the Soul with God, a real participation of the Divine Nature, the very Image of God drawn upon the Soul, or in the Apostle's phrase, *it is Christ formed within us.* Briefly, I know not how the nature of Religion can be more fully expressed than by calling it *a Divine Life*; and under these terms I shall discourse of it, shewing first how it is called *a Life*, and then how it is termed *Divine.*

I choose to express it by the name of *life*, first because of its permanency and stability: Religion is not a sudden start, or passion of the Mind, not though it should rise to the height of a rapture, and seem to transport a man to extraordinary performances. There are few but have convictions of the necessity of doing something for the salvation of their Souls, which may push them forward some steps, with a

Its Permanency and Stability.

great deal of ſeeming haſt; but anon they flagg and give over; they were in hot mood, but now they are cooled; they did ſhoot forth freſh and high, but are quickly withered, becauſe they had no root in themſelves. Theſe ſudden fits may be compared to the violent and convulſive motions of Bodies newly beheaded, cauſed by the agitations of the animal ſpirits, after the Soul is departed, which however violent and impetuous, can be of no long continuance; whereas the motions of holy Souls are conſtant and regular, proceeding from a permanent, and lively principle. It is true, this Divine life continueth not alwayes in that ſame ſtrength and vigour, but many times ſuffers ſad decays, and holy men find greater difficulty in reſiſting temptations, and leſs alacrity in the performance of their duties; yet it is not quite extinguiſhed, nor are they abandoned to the power of theſe corrupt affections, which ſway and over-rule the reſt of the world.

Its freedome and unconſtrainednes.

Again, Religion may be deſigned by the name of Life, becauſe it is an inward,

inward, free, and ſelf-moving principle, and thoſe who have made progreſs in it, are not acted only by external Motives, driven meerly by threatnings, nor bribed by promiſes, nor conſtrain'd by Laws; but are powerfully inclined to that which is good, and delight in the performance of it: The love which a Pious man carries to God, and goodneſs, is not ſo much by vertue of a Command enjoyning him ſo to do, as by a new Nature inſtructing and prompting him to it; nor doth he pay his devotions, as an unavoidable tribute only to appeaſe the Divine Juſtice, or quiet his clamorous Conſcience; but thoſe Religious exerciſes are the proper emanations of the divine life, the natural employments of the new born Soul; he prayes and gives thanks, and repents, not only becauſe theſe things are commanded, but rather becauſe he is ſenſible of his wants, and of the Divine goodneſs, and of the folly and miſery of a ſinful life; his charity is not forced, nor his alms extorted from him, his love makes him willing to

give; and though there were no outward obligation, his *heart would deviſe liberal things*: injuſtice or intemperance, and all other vices, are as contrary to his temper, and conſtitution, as the baſeſt actions are to the moſt generous ſpirit, and impudence and ſcurrility to thoſe who are naturally modeſt: ſo
1 Joh. 3. 9. that I may well ſay with St. *John, Whoſoever is born of God doth not commit ſin: for his ſeed remaineth in him, and he cannot ſin becauſe he is born of God.* Though holy and religious perſons do much eye the Law of God, and have a great regard unto it, yet is it not ſo much the ſanction of the Law, as its reaſonableneſs, and purity and goodneſs which doth prevail with them; they account it excellent and deſirable in its ſelf, and that in keeping of it there is great reward: and that Divine Love wherewith they are acted, makes them become a Law unto themſelves.

Quis legem det amantibus?
Major eſt amor lex ipſe ſibi.

For who can give a Law to thoſe that love?
Love's a more powerful Law which doth ſuch perſons move.

In a word, what our bleſſed Saviour ſaid of himſelf, is in ſome meaſure applicable to his followers, that it's their meat and drink to do their Father's will: and as the natural appetite is carried out toward food, though we ſhould not reflect on the neceſſity of it for the preſervation of our lives; ſo are they carried with a natural and unforced propenſion toward that which is good and commendable. It is true, external motives are many times of great uſe to excite and ſtir up this inward principle, eſpecially in its infancy and weakneſs, when it's often ſo languid, that the man himſelf can ſcarce diſcern it, hardly being able to move one ſtep forward, but when he is puſht by his hopes, or his fears, by the Joh. 4. 34.

the preſſure of an affliction, or the ſenſe of a mercy, by the authority of the Law, or the perſwaſion of others: Now if ſuch a perſon be conſcientious and uniform in his obedience, and earneſtly groaning under the ſenſe of his dulneſs, and is deſirous to perform his duties with more ſpirit, and vigor: theſe are the firſt motions of the divine life, which though it be faint, and weak, will ſurely be cheriſhed by the influences of Heaven, and grow unto greater maturity: but he who is utterly deſtitute of this inward principle, and doth not aſpire unto it, but contents himſelf with thoſe performances whereunto he is prompted by Education or cuſtom, by the fear of Hell, or carnal notions of Heaven, can no more be accounted a religious perſon, than a Puppit can be call'd a Man. This forced and artificial religion is commonly heavy and languid, like the motion of a weight forced upward, it is cold and ſpritleſs, like the uneaſie complyance of a wife married againſt her will, who carries dutifully toward the husband whom ſhe

ſhe doth not love, out of ſome ſenſe of Virtue or Honour: Hence alſo this religion is ſcant and niggardly, eſpecially in thoſe duties which do greateſt violence to mens carnal inclinations, and thoſe ſlaviſh ſpirits will be ſure to do no more, than is abſolutely required, 'tis a Law that compels them, and they will be loath to go beyond what it ſtints them to, nay, they will ever be putting ſuch gloſſes on it, as may leave themſelves the greateſt liberty; whereas the Spirit of true Religion is franck and liberal, far from ſuch peeviſh and narrow reckoning; and he who hath given himſelf intirely unto God will never think he doth too much for him.

Religion a Divine Principle.

By this time I hope it doth appear, that Religion is with a great deal of reaſon termed *a Life* or vital principle, and that it's very neceſſary to diſtinguiſh betwixt it, and that obedience which is conſtrained, and depends on external cauſes: I come next to give an account why I deſigned it by the name of *divine life*, and ſo it may be called, not only in regard of its

its fountain and original, having God for its Author, and being wrought in the Souls of men by the power of his Holy Spirit; but also in regard of its nature, Religion being a resemblance of the Divine perfections, the Image of the Almighty shining in the Soul of Man: nay it is a real participation of his Nature, it is a beam of the Eternal Light, a drop of that Infinite Ocean of goodness, and they who are eudued with it, may be said to have *God dwelling in their Souls, and Christ formed within them.*

What the Natural Life is.

Before I descend to a more particular consideration of that Divine Life wherein true Religion doth consist, it will perhaps be fit to speak a little of that natural or animal Life which prevails in those who are strangers to the other: and by this I understand nothing else, but our inclination and propension toward those things which are pleasing and acceptable to Nature: or self-Love issuing forth and spreading it self into as many branches as men have several appetites and inclinations: The root and foundation of the animal life

life I reckon to be Senſe taking it largely, as it is oppoſed unto Faith, and importeth our perception and reſentment of things, that are either grateful or troubleſom unto us. Now thoſe animal affections conſidered in themſelves, and as they are implanted in us by nature, are not vitious or blameable, nay they are inſtances of the Wiſdom of the Creator furniſhing his Creatures with ſuch appetites as tend to the preſervation and welfare of their lives: theſe are inſtead of a Law unto the brute Beaſts, whereby they are directed towards the ends for which they were made; but Man being made for higher purpoſes, and to be guided by more excellent Laws, becomes guilty and criminal when he is ſo far tranſported by the inclinations of this lower Life, as to violate his duty, or neglect the higher and more noble deſigns of his creation: Our natural affections are not wholly to be extirpated and deſtroyed, but only to be moderated and over-ruled by a ſuperiour and more excellent principle: In a word, the difference betwixt a religious and wicked

wicked man, is, that in the one the Divine life bears ſway, in the other the animal doth prevail.

The different tendencies of the natural life.

But it is ſtrange to obſerve unto what different courſes this natural principle will ſometimes carry thoſe who are wholy guided by it, according to the divers circumſtances that concur with it to determine them: and the not conſidering this doth frequently occaſion very dangerous miſtakes, making men think well of themſelves by reaſon of that ſeeming difference which is betwixt them and others, whereas perhaps their actions do all the while flow from one and the ſame original. If we conſider the natural temper, and conſtitution of mens Souls, we ſhall find ſome to be airie, frolick and light, which makes their behaviour extravagant and ridiculous; whereas others are naturally ſerious and ſevere, and their whole carriage compoſed into ſuch gravity as gains them a great deal of Reverence and Eſteem: ſome are of an humurous, rugged, and moroſe temper, and can neither be pleaſed themſelves, nor endure

dure that others ſhould be ſo; but all are not born under ſuch ſowre and unhappy Stars, for ſome perſons have a certain ſweetneſs and benignity rooted in their natures, and they find the greateſt pleaſure in the endearments of Society, and the mutual complacency of Friends, and covet nothing more than to have every body obliged to them: And it is well that Nature hath provided this complectional tenderneſs to ſupply the defect of true charity in the world, and to incline men to do ſomething for one another's welfare. Again, in regard of Education ſome have never been taught to follow any other rules, than thoſe of Pleaſure or Advantage; but others are ſo enured to obſerve the ſtricteſt rules of decency and honour, and ſome inſtances of Virtue, that they are hardly capable of doing any thing which they have been accuſtom'd to look upon as baſe and unworthy.

In fine, it is no ſmall difference in the deportment of meer natural men that doth ariſe from the ſtrength or weakneſs of their Wit or Judgment, and

and from their care or negligence in uſing them: intemperance, and luſt: injuſtice and oppreſſion, and all thoſe other impieties which abound in the world, and render it ſo miſerable, are the iſſues of ſelf-love, the effects of the *animal life*, when it is neither overpowered by Religion, nor govern'd by natural reaſon; but if it once take hold of reaſon, and get judgment and wit to be of its party, it will many times diſdain the groſſer ſort of vices, and ſpring up unto fair imitations of Virtue and Goodneſs: if a man have but ſo much reaſon as to conſider the prejudice which intemperance and inordinate luſt doth bring unto his health, his fortune and his reputation, ſelf-love may ſuffice to reſtrain him: and one may obſerve the rules of Moral Juſtice in dealing with others, as the beſt way to ſecure his own intereſt, and maintain his credit in the world. But this is not all, this natural principle by the help of reaſon may take a higher flight, and come nigher the inſtances of Piety and Religion; it may incline a man to the diligent

diligent ſtudy of Divine Truths: for why ſhould not theſe as well as other ſpeculations be pleaſant and grateful to curious and inquiſitive humors: it may make men zealous in maintaining and propagating ſuch opinions as they have eſpouſed, and be very deſirous that others ſhould ſubmit unto their Judgment, and approve the choice of Religion, which themſelves have made: it may make them delight to hear and compoſe excellent diſcourſes about the matters of Religion; for Eloquence is very pleaſant whatever be the ſubject: nay ſome it may diſpoſe to no ſmall height of ſenſible devotion: the glorious things that are ſpoken of Heaven may make even a carnal heart in love with it: the Metaphors and Similitudes made uſe of in Scripture of Crowns and Scepters, and Rivers of pleaſure, &c. will eaſily affect a man's fancy, and make him wiſh to be there, though he neither underſtand nor deſire thoſe ſpiritual pleaſures which are deſcribed and ſhadowed forth by theſe: and when ſuch a perſon comes to believe that Chriſt has

purchaſed theſe glorious things for him, he may feel a kind of tenderneſs and affection towards ſo great a Benefactor, and imagine that he is mightily inamoured of him, and yet all the while continue a ſtranger to the holy temper and ſpirit of the Bleſſed Jeſus, and ſo inſtead of a Deity he may imbrace a cloud: and what hand the natural conſtitution may have in the rapturous devotions of ſome melancholy perſons, hath been excellently diſcovered of late by ſeveral Learned and Judicious Pens.

To conclude, there is nothing proper to make a man's life pleaſant, or himſelf eminent and conſpicuous in the World, but this natural principle aſſiſted by Wit & Reaſon may prompt him to it: and tho I do not condemn theſe things in themſelves, yet it concerns us nearly to know and conſider their nature, both that we may keep within due bounds, and alſo that we may learn never to value our ſelves, on the account of ſuch attainments, nor lay the ſtreſs of Religion upon our natural appetites or performances.

It

It is now time to return to the consideration of that *Divine Life* whereof I was discoursing before, that *life which is hid with Christ in God*, and therefore hath no glorious shew or appearance in the world, and to the natural spirit will seem a mean and insipid notion. As the Animal life consisteth in that narrow and confined love which is terminated on a mans self, and in his propension towards those things that are pleasing to Nature; So the Divine Life stands in an universal and unbounded affection, and in the mastery over our natural inclinations, that they may never be able to betray us to those things which we know to be blamable: The root of the divine life is Faith, the chief branches are Love to God, Charity to Man, Purity, and Humility: For (as an Excellent Person hath well observed) however these names be common and vulgar, and make no extraordinary sound, yet do they carry such a mighty sence, that the tongue of Man or Angel can pronounce nothing more weighty or excellent. Faith hath the same place

Wherein the Divine Life doth consist.

in the Divine life which Senſe hath in the natural, being indeed nothing elſe, but a kind of ſenſe, or feeling perſwaſion of Spiritual things: It extends it ſelf unto all Divine Truths; but in our lapſed eſtate, it hath a peculiar relation to the declarations of God's mercy and reconcileableneſs to Sinners through a Mediator, and therefore receiving its denomination from that principal object is ordinarily termed, *Faith in Jeſus Chriſt.*

The Love of God is a delightful and affectionate ſence of the Divine perfections, which makes the Soul reſign and ſacrifice it ſelf wholly unto him, deſiring above all things to pleaſe him, and delighting in nothing ſo much as in fellowſhip and communion with him, and being ready to do or ſuffer any thing for his ſake, or at his pleaſure: though this affection may have its firſt riſe from the Favours and Mercies of God toward our ſelves, yet doth it in its growth and progreſs tranſcend ſuch particular conſiderations, and ground it ſelf on his infinite goodneſs manifeſted in all the Works of Creation

tion and Providence. A Soul thus poſſeſſed with Divine Love, muſt needs be inlarged towards all Mankind in a ſincere and unbounded, affection becauſe of the relation they carry unto God being his Creatures, and having ſomething of his Image ſtamped upon them: and this is that *Charity* I named as the ſecond branch of Religion, and under which all the parts of Juſtice, all the duty's we owe to our Neighbour are eminently comprehended: for he who doth truly love all the world will be nearly concerned in the intereſts of every one, and ſo far from wronging or injuring any perſon, that he will reſent any evil that befals to others, as if it happened to himſelf.

By *Purity*, I underſtand a due abſtractedneſs from the body, and maſtery over the inferiour appetites: or ſuch a temper and diſpoſition of mind, as makes a man deſpiſe & abſtain from all pleaſures and delights of ſence or fancy which are ſinful in themſelves, or tend to extinguiſh or leſſen our reliſh of more divine and intellectual pleaſures, which doth alſo infer a re-

ſoluteneſs to undergo all thoſe hard-ſhips he may meet with in the per-formance of his duty: ſo that not only Chaſtity and Temperance, but alſo Chriſtian Courage and Magnanimity may come under this head.

Humility imports a deep ſence of our own meanneſs, with a hearty and affectionate acknowledgment of our owing all that we are to the Divine Bounty, which is alwayes accompa-nied with a profound ſubmiſſion to the Will of God, and great deadneſs toward the glory of the world, and applauſe of men.

Theſe are the higheſt Perfections that either Men or Angels are capable of, the very foundation of Heaven laid in the Soul, and he who hath attain'd them needs not deſire to pry into the hidden Rolls of God's Decrees, or ſearch the Volumes of Heaven to know what's determined about his everlaſting con-dition, but he may find a Copy of God's Thoughts concerning him writ-ten in his own breaſt: his love to God may give him aſſurance of God's fa-vour to him, and thoſe beginnings of happineſs

happineſs which he feels in the conformity of the powers of his Soul to the Nature of God, and compliance with his Will, is a ſure pledge that his felicity ſhall be perfected, and continued unto all Eternity: And it is not without reaſon that one ſaid, *I had rather ſee the real impreſſions of a God-like Nature upon my own Soul, then have a Viſion from Heaven, or an Angel ſent to tell me that my name were inroll'd in the Book of Life.*

When we have ſaid all that we can, the ſecret Myſteries of a new Nature, and Divine Life can never be ſufficiently expreſſed, language and words cannot reach them; nor can they be truly underſtood but by thoſe Souls that are enkindled within, and awakened unto the ſenſe and reliſh of Spiritual things, *There is a ſpirit in man, and the inſpiration of the Almighty giveth this underſtanding:* The power and life of Religion may be better expreſſed in actions than in words, becauſe actions are more lively things, and do better repreſent the inward principle whence they proceed, and therefore we may

Religion better underſtood by actions, than by words.

take the beſt meaſure of thoſe gracious indowments, from the deportment of thoſe in whom they reſide, eſpecially as they are perfectly exemplified in the holy life of our Bleſſed Saviour, a main part of whoſe buſineſs in this world was to teach by his practiſe what he did require of others, and to make his own converſation an exact reſemblance of thoſe unparalell'd Rules which he preſcribed: So that if ever true Goodneſs was viſible to mortal eyes, it was then when his preſence did beautifie and illuſtrate this lower world.

Divine Love exemplified in our Saviour.

That ſincere and devout Affection wherewith his Bleſſed Soul did conſtantly burn toward his Heavenly Father, did expreſs it ſelf in an intire reſignation to his Will, it was this was his *very meat to do the will, and finiſh the work of him that ſent him*; this was the exerciſe of his Childhood, and the conſtant imployment of his riper age; he ſpared no travail or pains while he was about his Father's buſineſs, but took ſuch infinite Content and Satisfaction in the performance of it, that when being

His Diligence in doing Gods Will.

being faint and weary with his Journey he reſted him on *Jacob*'s Well, and intreated a drink of the *Samaritane* Woman, the ſucceſs of his Conference with her, and the acceſſion that was made to the Kingdom of God, filled his Mind with ſuch delight, as ſeemed to have redounded to his very Body, refreſhing his ſpirits, and making him forget the thirſt whereof he complain'd before, and refuſe the meat which he had ſent the Diſciples to buy: Nor was he leſs patient and ſubmiſſive in ſuffering the Will of God, then diligent in doing of it: he endured the ſharpeſt Afflictions, and extreameſt Miſeries that ever were inflicted on any mortal, without a repining thought, or diſcontented word: for tho he was far from a ſtupid inſenſibility, or a phantaſtick or Stoical obſtinacy, and had as quick a ſenſe of pain as other men, and the deepeſt apprehenſion of what he was to ſuffer in his Soul (as his *Bloody Sweat*, and the *ſore amazement and ſorrow* which he profeſt do abundantly declare) yet did he intirely ſubmit to that ſevere diſpenſation of

His Patience in bearing it.

Provi-

Providence, and willingly acquieſced in it.

And he prayed to God, that *if it were poſſible* (or as one of the Evangeliſts hath, *if he were willing*) *that Cup might be removed*; yet he gently added, *nevertheleſs not my will but thine be done.* Of what ſtrange importance are the expreſſions, *Joh.* 12.27. where he firſt acknowledgeth the anguiſh of his ſpirit (*Now is my Soul troubled*) which would ſeem to produce a kind of demurre, (*And what ſhall I ſay,*) and then he goes to deprecate his Sufferings, (*Father, ſave me from this hour;*) which he had no ſooner uttered, but he doth, as it were, on ſecond thoughts recall it in theſe words, *But for this cauſe came I into the world*; and concludes, *Father glorifie thy Name.* Now we muſt not look on this as any levity, or blameable weakneſs in the Bleſſed Jeſus, he knew all along what he was to ſuffer, and did moſt reſolutely undergo it; but it ſhews us the unconceiveable weight and preſſure that he was to bear, which being ſo afflicting and contrary to Nature, he could not think

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of without terrour; yet conſidering the Will of God, and the glory which was to redound to him from thence, he was not only content but deſirous to ſuffer it.

Another inſtance of his Love to God, was his delight in converſing with him by Prayer, which made him frequently retire himſelf from the world, and with the greateſt Devotion and Pleaſure ſpend whole Nights in that Heavenly Exerciſe, though he had no ſins to confeſs, and but few ſecular Intereſts to pray for; which alas! are almoſt the only things that are wont to drive us to our devotions: nay, we may ſay his whole Life was a kind of Prayer, a conſtant courſe of Communion with God: if the Sacrifice was not alwayes offering, yet was the fire ſtill kept alive: nor was ever the Bleſſed Jeſus ſurprized with that dulneſs or tepidity of ſpirit which we muſt many times wreſtle with, before we can be fit for the exerciſe of devotion. His conſtant Devotion.

In the ſecond place I ſhould ſpeak of his Love and Charity toward men, but he who would expreſs it, muſt tranſcribe His Charity to men.

transcribe the History of the Gospel, and comment upon it, for scarce any thing is recorded to have been done or spoken by him which was not designed for the good and advantage of some one or other; all his Miraculous Works were instances of his Goodness as well as his Power, and they benefited those on whom they were wrought, as well as they amazed the beholders. His Charity was not confined to his Kindred, or Relations; nor was all his kindness swallowed up in the endearments of that peculiar friendship which he carried toward the beloved Disciple, but every one was his *Friend* who obeyed his *holy Commands*, Joh. 15. 4. and *whosoever did the will of his Father*, the same was to him as *his Brother, and Sister and Mother*.

Nev r was any unwelcom to him who came with an honest intention, nor did h: deny any request which tended to the good of those that asked it: So what was spoken of that *Roman* Emperour, whom for his goodness they called the *Darling of Mankind*,

was really performed by him, that never any departed from him with a heavy countenance, except that rich Youth, *Mark* 10. who was ſorry to hear that the Kingdom of Heaven ſtood at ſo high a rate, and that he could not ſave his Soul and his Money too; and certainly it troubled our Saviour to ſee that when a price was in his hand to get wiſdom, yet he had no heart to it; the ingenuity that appeared in his firſt addreſs, had already procured ſome kindneſs for him; for it is ſaid, *And Jeſus beholding him loved him*: But muſt he for his ſake cut out a new way to Heaven, and alter the nature of things which make it impoſſible that a covetous man ſhould be happy?

And what ſhall I ſpeak of his meekneſs, who could encounter the monſtrous ingratitude and diſſimulation of that miſcreant who betrayed him, in no harſher terms then theſe, *Judas betrayeſt thou the Son of Man with a Kiſs?* What further evidence could we deſire of his fervent and unbounded Charity, then that he willingly laid

laid down his life even for his moſt bitter Enemies, and mingling his Prayers with his Blood, beſought the Father that his Death might not be laid to their charge, but might become the means of Eternal Life to thoſe very perſons who procured it?

His Purity. The Third Branch of the Divine Life is Purity, which, as I ſaid, conſiſts in a neglect of worldly enjoyments and accommodations, and a reſolute enduring of all ſuch troubles as we meet with in the doing of our duty: Now ſurely if ever any perſon was wholly dead to all the pleaſures of the natural Life, it was the Bleſſed Jeſus, who ſeldom taſted them when they came in his way; but never ſtept out of his road to ſeek them: though he allowed others the comforts of Wedlock, and honoured Marriage with his Preſence, yet he choſe the ſeverity of a Virgin Life, and never knew the Nuptial Bed: and though at the ſame time he ſupplyed the want of Wine with a Miracle, yet he would not work one for the relief of his own hunger

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in the Wilderneſs: So Gracious and Divine was the temper of his Soul in allowing to others ſuch lawful gratifications as himſelf thought good to abſtain from, and ſupplying not only their more extream and preſſing neceſſities, but alſo their ſmaller and leſs conſiderable wants. We many times hear of our Saviour's ſighs, and groans, and tears; but never that he laught, and but once that he rejoyced in ſpirit; ſo that through his whole Life he did exactly anſwer that Character given of him by the Prophet of old, That he was *a man of ſorrows, and acquainted with griefs*: Nor were the troubles and diſaccommodations of his Life rather his fate than choice, for never did there any appear on the Stage of the World with greater advantages to have raiſed himſelf to the higheſt ſecular felicity: he who could convene ſuch a prodigious number of Fiſhes into his Diſciples Net: and at another time received that tribute from a Fiſh which he was to pay to the Temple, might eaſily have made himſelf the richeſt Perſon in the world;

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nay without any money he could have maintained an Army powerful enough to have Juſtled *Cæſar* out of his Throne, having oftner than once fed Seven Thouſand with a few loaves and ſmall fiſhes: but to ſhew how ſmall eſteem he had of all the Enjoyments in the world, he chooſed to live in ſo poor and mean a condition, that *though the Foxes had holes, and the Birds of the Air had neſts, yet he who was Lord and Heir of all things, had not whereon to lay his head*: He did not frequent the Courts of Princes, nor affect the acquaintance and converſe of great Ones, but being reputed the Son of a Carpenter, he had Fiſher-men, and ſuch other poor people for his Companions, and lived at ſuch a rate as ſuited with the meanneſs of that quality.

His Humility. And thus I am brought unawares to ſpeak of his Humility, the laſt branch of the Divine Life, wherein he was a moſt Eminent Pattern to us, that we might *learn of him to be meek and lowly in heart*: I ſhall not now ſpeak of that infinite condeſcention of the Eternal Son of God, in taking our Nature upon

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on him; but only reflect on our Saviour's lowly and humble deportment while he was in the world. He had none of those sins and imperfections, which may justly humble the best of men; but he was so intirely swallowed up with a deep sense of the infinite Perfections of God, that he appeared as nothing in his own eyes, I mean in so far as he was a Creature. He considered those Eminent Perfections which shined in his Blessed Soul as not his own but the gifts of God, and therefore assumed nothing to himself for them, but with the profoundest humility renounced all pretences to them: hence did he refuse that ordinary compellation of *Good Master*, when address'd to his humane Nature by one who it seems was ignorant of his Divinity: *Why calleſt thou me Good* (saith he) *there is none good, but God only.* As if he had said, The goodness of any creature (and such only thou takest me to be) is not worthy to be named or taken notice of, 'tis God alone who is originally and essentially Good. He never made use of his Miraculous Pow-

er for vanity or oſtentation; he would not gratifie the curioſity of the *Jewes* with a ſign from Heaven, ſome Prodigious appearance in the Air: nor would he follow the advice of his Countrymen and Kindred, who would have had all his great Works performed in the eyes of the World for gaining him the greater fame: but when his Charity had prompted him to the relief of the miſerable, his humility made him many times enjoyn the concealment of the Miracle; and when the glory of God, and the deſign for which he came unto the world, required the publication of them, he aſcribed the honour of all to his Father, telling them, *That of himſelf he was able to do nothing.*

I cannot inſiſt on all the inſtances of Humility in his deportment towards men: his withdrawing himſelf when they would have made him a King, his ſubjection not only to his Bleſſed Mother, but to her husband during his younger years, and his ſubmiſſion to all the indignities and affronts, which his rude and malitious Enemies did put upon him, the hiſtory of his holy

Life

Life recorded by those who conversed with him, is full of such passages as these: and indeed the serious and attentive study of it, is the best way to get right measures of humility, and all the other parts of Religion, which I have been endeavouring to describe.

But now that I may lessen your trouble of reading a long Letter by making some pauses in it; Let me here subjoyn a Prayer that might be proper when one who had formerly entertain'd some false notions of Religion, begins to discover what it is.

A Prayer.

INfinite and Eternal Majestie, Author and Fountain of Being and Blessedness, how little do we poor sinful Creatures know of Thee, or the way to serve and please Thee? We talk of Re-

ligion and pretend unto it; but alas! how few are there that know and consider what it means? how easily do we mistake the affections of our Nature, and issues of self-love, for those Divine Graces which alone can render us acceptable in thy sight? It may justly grieve me to consider, that I should have wandered so long, and contented my self so often with vain shadows and false images of Piety and Religion: yet I cannot but acknowledge and adore thy goodness, who hast been pleased in some measure to open mine eyes, and let me see, what it is at which I ought to aim: I rejoyce to consider what mighty improvements my Nature is capable of, and what a Divine temper of spirit doth shine in those whom thou art pleased to choose, and causest to approach unto thee. Blessed be thine Infinite Mercy who sent thine own Son to dwell among men, and instruct them by his Example as well as his Lawes, giving them a perfect Pattern of what they ought to be. O that the Holy Life of the Blessed Jesus may be alwayes in my thoughts, and before mine eyes, till I receive a deep sense and impression of those Excellent Graces that shined

ſhined ſo eminently in him, and let me never remit my endeavours till that new and Divine Nature prevail in my Soul, and Chriſt be formed within me.

The Excellency and advantage of Religion.

AND now, my dear Friend, having discovered the nature of True Religion, before I proceed any further, it will not perhaps be unfit to fix our Meditations a little on the Excellency and advantages of it, that we may be excited to the more vigorous and diligent prosecution of those Methods whereby we may attain so great a felicity. But alas! what words shall we find to express that inward satisfaction, those hidden pleasures which can never be rightly understood, but by those holy Souls who feel them? *a stranger intermeddleth not with their joy.* Holiness is the right temper, the vigorous and healthful constitution of the Soul: its faculties had formerly been enfeebled, and disordered so that they could not exerce their natural functions: it had wearied it self with endless tossings, and rollings, and was never able to find

Prov. 14. 10.

find any reſt: now that diſtemper is removed, and it feels it ſelf well, there is a due harmony in its faculties, and a ſprightly vigour poſſeſſeth every part: the underſtanding can diſcern what is good, and the will can cleave unto it, the affections are not tyed to the motions of Senſe, and the influence of External objects; but they are ſtirred by more Divine impreſſions, are touched by a ſenſe of inviſible things.

The Excellency of Divine Love.

Let us deſcend, if you pleaſe, into a nearer and more particular view of Religion in thoſe ſeveral branches of it which were named before: let us conſider that love and affection where-with holy Souls are united to God, that we may ſee what Excellency and Felicity is involved in it. Love is that powerful and prevalent paſſion, by which all the faculties and inclinations of the Soul are determined, and on which both its perfection and happineſs doth depend. The worth and excellency of a Soul is to be meaſured by the object of its love: he who loveth mean and ſordid things, doth

thereby become baſe and vile; but a noble and well-placed affection doth advance and improve the ſpirit unto a confirmity with the perfections which it loves: The images of theſe do frequently preſent themſelves unto the Mind, and by a ſecret force and energie inſinuate into the very conſtitution of the Soul, and mould and faſhion it unto their own likeneſs: Hence we may ſee how eaſily Lovers or Friends do ſlide unto the imitation of the perſon whom they affect, and how even before they are aware, they begin to reſemble them, not only in the more conſiderable inſtances of their deportment, but alſo in their voice and geſture, and that which we call their meen and air; and certainly we ſhould as well tranſcribe the vertues and inward beauties of the Soul, if they were the object and motive of our love: but now as all the Creatures we converſe with have their mixture and alloy, we are alwayes in hazard to be ſullied, and corrupted by placing our affection on them: Paſſion doth eaſily blind our eyes, that we firſt approve, and then imitate

imitate the things that are blameable in them; The true way to improve and ennoble our Souls, is by fixing our love on the Divine Perfections, that we may have them alwayes before us, and derive an impreſſion of them on our ſelves, and beholding with open face as in a glaſs the glory of the Lord, we may be changed into the ſame Image from glory to glory: he who with a generous and holy ambition had raiſed his eyes toward that uncreated Beauty and Goodneſs, and fixed his affection there, is quite of another ſpirit, a more excellent and heroick temper than the reſt of the world, and cannot but infinitely diſdain all mean and unworthy things, will not entertain any low or baſe thoughts, which might diſparage his high and noble pretenſions. Love is the greateſt and moſt excellent thing we are maſters of, and therefore it is folly and baſeneſs to beſtow it unworthily; it is indeed the only thing we can call our own, other things may be taken from us by violence, but none can raviſh our love; if any thing elſe be

be counted ours, by giving our love, we give all, in so far as we make over our hearts and wills, by which we possess our other enjoyments: it is not possible to refuse him any thing, to whom by love we have given our selves; nay since it is the priviledge of gifts to receive their value from the mind of the giver, and not to be measured by the event, but by the desire, he who loveth may in some sense be said not only to bestow all that he hath, but all things else which may make the beloved person happy, since he doth heartily wish them, and would really give them, if they were in his power: in which sense it is that one makes bold to say, *That Divine Love doth in a manner give God unto himself, by the complacency it takes in the happiness and perfection of his Nature:* But though this may seem too big an expression, certainly love is the worthiest Present we can offer unto God, and it is extreamly debased when we bestow it another way.

When this affection is misplaced, it doth often vent it self, in such expressions,

ons, as point at its genuine and proper object, and insinuate where it ought to be placed: The flattering and blasphemous terms of adoration, wherein men do sometimes express their Passion, are the language of that affection which was made and designed for God: as he who is accustomed to speak to some great Person, doth perhaps unawares accost another with those Titles he was wont to give to him: But certainly that Passion which accounteth its object a Deitie, ought to be bestowed on him who is really so: Those unlimited submissions, which would debase the Soul, if directed to any other, will exalt and ennoble it, when placed here: those chains and cords of love are infinitely more glorious than liberty it self; this slavery is more noble than all the Empires in the World.

The Advantages of Divine Love.

Again, as Divine Love doth advance and elevate the Soul, so it is that alone which can make it happy: the highest and most ravishing pleasures, the most solid and substantial delights, the humane Nature is capable of, are those which

which ariſe from the endearments of a well-placed and ſucceſsful affection. That which imbitters Love, and makes it ordinarily a very troubleſom and hurtful Paſſion, is the placing it on thoſe who have not worth enough to deſerve it, or affection and gratitude to requite it, or whoſe abſence may deprive us of the pleaſure of their converſe, or their miſeries occaſion our trouble: To all theſe Evils are they expoſed, whoſe chief and ſupream affection is placed on Creatures like themſelves; but the Love of God delivers us from them all.

The worth of the Object.

First, I ſay, Love muſt needs be miſerable, and full of trouble and diſquietude, when there is not worth and excellency enough in the Object to anſwer the vaſtneſs of its capacity: ſo eager and violent a Paſſion cannot but fret and torment the ſpirit, when it finds not wherewith to ſatisfie its cravings; and indeed ſo large and unbounded is its nature, that it muſt be extreamly pinched, and ſtraitned, when confined to any Creature: nothing below an Infinite Good can afford

ford it room to ſtretch it ſelf, and exerce its activity and vigour: what is a little skin-deep beauty or ſome ſmall degrees of goodneſs to match or ſatisfie a Paſſion which was made for God, deſigned to embrace an Infinite Good: No wonder Lovers do ſo hardly ſuffer any Rival, and do not deſire that others ſhould approve their paſſion by imitating it: they know the ſcantneſs and narrowneſs of the good which they love, that it cannot ſuffice two, being in effect too little for one: Hence Love *which is ſtrong as death* occaſioneth *Jealouſie which is cruel as the grave*, the coals whereof, are coals of fire, which hath a moſt violent flame.

But Divine Love hath no mixture of this gall: when once the Soul is fixed on that Supream and All-ſufficient Good, it finds ſo much perfection and goodneſs, as doth not only anſwer and ſatisfie its affection, but maſter and over-power it too: it finds all its love to be too faint and languid for ſuch a noble object, and is only ſorry that it can command no more, it wiſheth

eth for the Flammes of a *Seraph*, and longs for the time when it ſhall be wholly melted and diſſolved into love: and becauſe it can do ſo little it ſelf, it deſires the aſſiſtance of the whole Creation, that Angels and Men would concur with it in the admiration and love of thoſe Infinite Perfections.

The certainty to be beloved again.

Again, Love is accompanied with trouble, when it miſſeth a ſuitable return of affection: Love is the moſt valuable thing we can beſtow, and by giving it, we do in effect give all that we have; and therefore it muſt needs be afflicting to find ſo great a gift deſpiſed, that the Preſent which one hath made of his whole Heart, cannot prevail to obtain any favour for him: Perfect love is a kind of ſelf-dereliction, a wandering out of our ſelves, it's a kind of voluntary death, wherein the lover dyes to himſelf, and all his own intereſts, not thinking of them, nor caring for them any more, and minding nothing but how he may pleaſe and gratifie the party whom he loves: thus is he quite undone unleſs he

he meet with reciprocal affection, he neglects himself, and the other hath no regard to him; but if he be beloved, he is revived, as it were, and liveth in the soul and care of the person whom he loves, and now he begins to mind his own concernments, not so much because they are his, as because the beloved is pleased to own an intereſt in them: he becomes dear unto himself, because he is so unto the other.

But why should I enlarge in so known a matter, nothing can be more clear than that the happiness of Love depends on the return it meets with; and herein the Divine Lover hath unspeakably the advantage, having placed his affection on him whose Nature is Love, whose Goodness is as Infinite as his Being, whose Mercy prevented us, when we were his enemies, therefore cannot choose but imbrace us, when we are become his friends: it is utterly impossible that God should hide his Face, and deny his Love to a Soul wholly devoted to him, and which desires nothing so much as to serve and

pleaſe him: he cannot diſdain his own Image, nor the heart in which it is engraven: Love is all the tribute which we can pay him, and it is the Sacrifice which he will not deſpiſe.

The Preſence of the beloved perſon.

Another thing which diſturbs the pleaſure of Love, and renders it a miſerable and diſquiet Paſſion, is abſence and ſeparation from thoſe we love: it is not without a ſenſible affliction that friends do part, though for ſome little time, it is ſad to be deprived of that ſociety which is ſo delightful, our life becomes tedious, being ſpent in an impatient expectation of the happy hour wherein we may meet again: but if death have made the ſeparation, as ſometime or other it muſt, this occaſions a grief ſcarce to be parallelled by all the misfortunes of humane life, and wherein we pay dear enough for the comforts of our friendſhip. But O how happy are thoſe who have placed their love on him who can never be abſent from them: they need but to open their eyes, and they ſhall every where behold the traces of his Preſence and Glory, and converſe with him

him whom their Soul loveth; and this makes the darkeſt Priſon, or wildeſt Deſart, not only ſupportable; but delightful to them.

In fine, a Lover is miſerable if the perſon whom he loveth be ſo: They who have made an exchange of hearts by love, get thereby an intereſt in one anothers happineſs and miſery: and this makes Love a troubleſome Paſſion, when placed on Earth. The moſt fortunate perſon hath grief enough to marre the tranquillity of his friend, and it is hard to hold out, when we are attacked on all hands, and ſuffer not only in our own perſon, but in anothers. But if God were the Object of our Love, we ſhould ſhare in an infinite happineſs without any mixture, or poſſibility of diminution: we ſhould rejoyce to behold the Glory of God, and receive comfort and pleaſure from all the Praiſes wherewith Men and Angels do Extol him: It ſhould delight us beyond all expreſſion to conſider, that the Beloved of our Souls is infinitely happy in himſelf, and that all his Enemies cannot ſhake or unſettle

That Divine Love makes us partake in an infinite happineſs.

ſettle his Throne: *That our God is in the Heavens, and doth whatſoever he pleaſeth.*

Behold on what ſure foundations his happineſs is built, whoſe Soul is poſſeſſed with Divine Love, whoſe will is transformed into the Will of God, and whoſe greateſt deſire is that his Maker ſhould be pleaſed: O the peace, the reſt, the ſatisfaction that attendeth ſuch a temper of mind!

He that loveth God finds ſweetneſs in every diſpenſation.

What an infinite pleaſure muſt it needs be, thus as it were to loſe our ſelves in him, and being ſwallowed up in the overcoming ſenſe of his goodneſs, to offer our ſelves a living Sacrifice alwayes aſcending unto him in flammes of love: never doth a Soul know what a ſolid Joy and ſubſtantial pleaſure is, till once being weary of it ſelf, it renounce all propriety, give it ſelf fully up unto the Author of its being, and feel it ſelf become a hallowed and devoted thing, and can ſay from an inward ſenſe and feeling, *My Beloved is mine*, (I account all his intereſt mine own) *and I am his*: I am content to be any thing for him, and care

care not for my ſelf, but that I may ſerve him,) a perſon moulded unto this temper, would find pleaſure in all the diſpenſations of Providence: Temporal Enjoyments would have another reliſh, when he ſhould taſte the Divine Goodneſs in them, and conſider them as tokens of Love ſent by his deareſt Lord and Maker: And chaſtiſements though they be not joyful but grievous, would hereby loſe their ſting, the rod as well as the ſtaff would comfort him: he would ſnatch a kiſs from the hand that were ſmiting him, and gather ſweetneſs from that ſeverity: nay he would rejoyce that though God did not the will of ſuch a worthleſs and fooliſh creature as himſelf, yet he did his own Will, and accompliſhed his own deſigns, which are infinitely more holy and wiſe.

The Exerciſes of Religion which to others are inſipid and tedious, do yield the higheſt pleaſure and delight to Souls poſſeſſed with Divine Love: they rejoyce when they are called to *go up to the houſe of the Lord*, that they may *ſee his power and his glory, as they have* Pſal. 63. 2.

The duties of Religion are delightful to him.

formerly ſeen it in his Sanctuary: They never think themſelves ſo happy, as when, having retired from the world, and gotten free from the noiſe and hurry of affairs, and ſilenced all their clamorous paſſions, thoſe troubleſom gueſts within, they have placed themſelves in the preſence of God, and entertain Fellowſhip and Communion with him: they delight to adore his Perfections, and recount his Favours, and to proteſt their affection to him, and tell him a thouſand times that they love him, to lay out their troubles or wants before him, and disburthen their hearts in his Boſom: Repentance it ſelf is a delightful exerciſe when it floweth from the principle of love, there is a ſecret ſweetneſs which accompanieth thoſe tears of remorſe, thoſe meltings and relentings of a Soul returning unto God, and regrating its former unkindneſs: The heightned endearments of Lovers newly reconciled after ſome eſtrangements of their affections, are a very imperfect ſhadow and reſemblance of this.

The

The ſeverities of a holy Life, and that conſtant watch which we are obliged to keep over our hearts and ways, are very troubleſom to thoſe who are only ruled and acted by an External Law, and have no law in their Minds inclining them to the performance of their duty; but where Divine Love poſſeſſeth the Soul, it ſtands as Sentinel to keep out every thing that may offend the Beloved, and doth diſdainfully repulſe thoſe temptations which aſſault it: it complyeth cheerfully, not only with explicite Commands, but with the moſt ſecret Notices of the Beloved's pleaſure, and is ingenious in diſcovering what will be moſt grateful and acceptable unto him: it makes Mortification and Self-denial almoſt change their harſh and dreadful names, and become eaſie, ſweet and delightful things.

But I find this part of my Letter ſwell bigger than I deſigned, (indeed who would not be tempted to dwell on ſo pleaſant a Theme) I ſhall endeavour to compenſate it by brevity in the other Points.

The Excellency of Charity.

The next Branch of the Divine Life, is an Universal Charity and Love: The Excellency of this Grace will be easily acknowledged; for what can be more noble and generous than a Heart inlarged to imbrace the whole World, whose wishes and designs are levelled at the good and welfare of the Universe, which considereth every man's interest as it's own? He who loveth his Neighbour as himself, can never entertain any base or injurious thought, or be wanting in expressions of bounty: he had rather suffer a thousand wrongs, than be guilty of one; and never accounts himself happy, but when some one or other hath been benefited by him: the malice or ingratitude of men is not able to resist his love; he overlooks their injuries, and pities their folly, and overcomes their evil with good, and never designs any other revenge against his most bitter and malitious Enemies, than to put all the obligations he can upon them, whether they will or not: Is it any wonder that such a Person be reverenced and admired, and accounted the Darling of

of Mankind? This inward goodneſs and benignity of ſpirit reflects a certain ſweetneſs and ſerenity upon the very countenance, and makes it amiable and lovely: it inſpireth the Soul with a noble reſolution and courage, and makes it capable of enterpriſing and effectuating the higheſt things: Thoſe Heroick Actions which we are wont to read with admiration, have for the moſt part been the effects of the Love of ones Country, or of particular Friendſhips, and certainly a more extenſive and univerſal affection, muſt be much more powerful and efficacious.

Again, as *Charity* flows from a Noble and Excellent temper; ſo it is accompanied with the greateſt Satisfaction and Pleaſure: it delights the Soul to feel it ſelf thus enlarged, and to be delivered from thoſe diſquieting as well as deforming Paſſions, Malice, Hatred, and Envy; and become Gentle, Sweet, and Benign: had I my choice of all things that might tend to my preſent felicity, I would pitch upon this, To have my heart poſſeſſed with

The Pleaſure that attends it.

the greateſt kindneſs and affection towards all men in the World, I am ſure this would make me partake in all the happineſs of others, their inward endowments and outward proſperity, every thing that did benefit and advantage them, would afford me comfort and pleaſure: and though I ſhould frequently meet with occaſions of grief and compaſſion, yet there is a ſweetneſs in commiſeration which makes it infinitely more deſireable than a ſtupid inſenſibility: and the conſideration of that Infinite Goodneſs and Wiſdom which governs the world, might repreſs any exceſſive trouble for particular Calamities that happen in it: and the hopes or poſſibility of mens after-happineſs, might moderate their ſorrow for their preſent misfortunes. Certainly next to the love and enjoyment of God, that ardent Charity and affection wherewith bleſſed Souls do imbrace one another, is juſtly to be reckoned as the greateſt felicity of thoſe Regions above, and did it univerſally prevail in the world, it would anticipate that bleſſedneſs, and

make

make us taſte of the Joyes of Heaven upon Earth.

That which I named as a Third Branch of Religion was *Purity*, and you may remember I deſcribed it to conſiſt in a contempt of ſenſual Pleaſures, and reſoluteneſs to undergo thoſe troubles and pains we may meet with in the performance of our duty: Now the naming of this may ſuffice to recommend it as a moſt Noble and Excellent Quality: There is no ſlavery ſo baſe as that whereby a man becomes drudge to his own Luſts; nor any Victory ſo glorious as that which is obtain'd over them: Never can that perſon be capable of any thing that is Noble and Worthy, who is ſunk in the groſs and feculent pleaſures of Senſe, or bewitched with the light and airy gratifications of fancy; but the Religious Soul is of a more Sublime and Divine temper, it knows it was made for higher things, and ſcorns to ſtep aſide one foot out of the ways of Holineſs, for the obtaining of any of theſe. The Excellency of *Purity*.

And

The Delight it affords.

And this Purity is accompanied with a great deal of Pleaſure: whatſoever defiles the Soul, diſturbs it too; all impure delights have a ſting in them, and leave ſmart and trouble behind them: Exceſs and Intemperance, and all inordinate Luſts, are ſo much Enemies to the health of the Body, and the intereſts of this preſent life, that a little conſideration might oblige any rational man to forbear them on that very ſcore: And if the Religious perſon go higher, and do not only abſtain from noxious pleaſures; but neglect thoſe that are innocent, this is not to be look'd upon as any violent and uneaſie reſtraint, but as the effect of better choice, that their Minds are taken up in the purſuit of more ſublime and refined delights, ſo that they cannot be concerned in theſe: any perſon that is engaged in a violent and paſſionate affection, will eaſily forget his ordinary gratifications, will be little curious about his dyet, or his bodily eaſe, or the Divertiſements he was wonted to delight in: No wonder then if Souls overpowered with Divine Love deſpiſe

ſpiſe inferiour pleaſures, and be almoſt ready to grudge the Body its neceſſary attendance for the common accommodations of life, judging all theſe impertinent to their main happineſs, and thoſe higher enjoyments they are purſuing. As for the hardſhips they may meet with, they rejoyce in them, as opportunities to exerciſe and teſtifie their affection: and ſince they are able to do ſo little for God, they are glad of the honour to ſuffer for him.

The laſt Branch of Religion is *Humility*; and however to vulgar and carnal eyes this may appear an abject, baſe and deſpicable quality, yet really the Soul of man is not capable of an higher and more noble endowment: It is a ſilly ignorance that begets pride, but Humility ariſes from a nearer acquaintance with excellent things, which keeps men from doating on trifles, or admiring themſelves becauſe of ſome petty attainments: Noble and well Educated Souls have no ſuch high opinion of Riches, Beauty, Strength, and other ſuch like advantages, The Excellency of Humility.

tages, as to value themſelves for them, or deſpiſe thoſe that want them: and as for inward worth and real goodneſs, the ſenſe they have of the Divine Perfections, makes them think very meanly of any thing they have hitherto attain'd, and be ſtill endeavouring to ſurmount themſelves, and make nearer approaches to thoſe infinite Excellencies which they admire.

I know not what thoughts people may have of Humility, but I ſee almoſt every perſon pretending unto it, and ſhunning ſuch expreſſions and actions as may make them be accounted arrogant and preſumptuous, ſo that thoſe who are moſt deſirous of praiſe, will be loath to commend themſelves. What are all thoſe complements and modes of Civility ſo frequent in our ordinary converſe, but ſo many proteſtations of our eſteem of others, and the low thoughts we have of our ſelves? And muſt not that Humility be a noble and excellent endowment, when the very ſhadows of it are accounted ſo neceſſary a part of good breeding. Again,

Again, this Grace is accompanied with a great deal of happineſs and tranquility: the proud and arrogant perſon is a trouble to all that converſe with him, but moſt of all unto himſelf: every thing is enough to vex him; but ſcarce any thing ſufficient to content and pleaſe him: he is ready to quarrel with every thing that falls out, as if he himſelf were ſuch a conſiderable perſon, that God Almighty ſhould do every thing to gratifie him, and all the Creatures of Heaven and Earth ſhould wait upon him, and obey his will: The leaves of high Trees do ſhake with every blaſt of wind; and every breath, every evil word will diſquiet and torment an arrogant man: but the humble perſon hath the advantage when he is deſpiſed, that none can think more meanly of him, than he doth of himſelf, and therefore he is not troubled at the matter, but can eaſily bear thoſe reproaches which wound the other to the Soul: and withal as he is leſs affected with injuries, ſo indeed he is leſs obnoxious unto them: *Contention which cometh of Pride* betrayes

The pleaſure and ſweetneſs of an humble temper.

betrayes a man into a thouſand inconveniencies, which thoſe of a meek and lowly temper are ſeldom meeting with: True and genuine humility begetteth both a veneration and love among all, wiſe and diſcerning perſons, while Pride defeateth it's own deſign, and depriveth a man of that honour it makes him pretend to.

But as the chief Exerciſes of Humility are thoſe which relate unto Almighty God, ſo theſe are accompany'd with the greateſt ſatisfaction and ſweetneſs; it is impoſſible to expreſs the great pleaſure and delight which Religious perſons feel in the loweſt proſtrations of their Soul before God, when having a deep ſenſe of the Divine Majeſty and Glory, they ſink (if I may ſo ſpeak) unto the very bottom of their beings, and vaniſh and diſappear in the preſence of God, by a ſerious and affectionate acknowledgment of their own nothingneſs, and the ſhortneſs and imperfections of all their attainments, when they underſtand the full ſenſe and emphaſis of the Pſalmiſt's exclamation, *Lord, what*

is Man? and can utter it with the ſame affection: neither did ever any haughty and ambitious perſon receive the praiſes and applauſes of men with ſo much pleaſure, as the humble and religious do renounce them, *Not unto us, O Lord, not unto us, but unto thy Name give glory*, &c.

Thus I have ſpoken ſomething of the Excellencies and Advantage of Religion in it's ſeveral Branches; but ſhould be very injurious to the Subject, did I pretend to have given any perfect account of it. Let us acquaint our ſelves with it, My dear Friend, Let us acquaint our ſelves with it, and experience will teach us more than all that ever hath been ſpoken or written concerning it. But if we may ſuppoſe the Soul to be already awakened unto ſome longing deſires after ſo great a Bleſſedneſs, it will be good to give them vent, and ſuffer them to iſſue forth in ſome ſuch aſpirations as theſe,

Good

A Prayer.

GOod God! what a mighty felicity is this to which we are called? How graciously hast thou joyn'd our Duty and Happiness together, and prescribed that for our work, the performance whereof is a great reward? And shall such silly worms be advanced to so great a height? Wilt Thou allow us to raise our eyes to Thee? Wilt thou admit and accept our affection? Shall we receive the impression of thy Divine Excellencies by beholding and admiring them, and partake of thy infinite Blessedness and Glory, by loving Thee, and rejoycing in them? O the happiness of those Souls that have broken the fetters of Self-love, and dis-intangl'd their affection from every narrow and particular good, whose Understandings are inlightned by thy Holy Spirit, and their wills inlarged to the extent of thine, who love thee above all things, and all Mankind for thy sake!

I am perſwaded, O God, I am perſwaded that I can never be happy, till my carnal and corrupt affections be mortify'd, and the pride and vanity of my ſpirit be ſubdued, and till I come ſeriouſly to deſpiſe the world, and think nothing of my ſelf. But O when ſhall it once be? O when wilt Thou come unto me, and ſatisfie my Soul with thy likeneſs, making me holy as thou art holy, even in all manner of converſation? Haſt thou given me a proſpect of ſo great a felicity, and wilt thou not bring me unto it? Haſt thou excited theſe deſires in my Soul, and wilt thou not alſo ſatisfie them? O teach me to do thy Will, for thou art my God, thy Spirit is good, lead me unto the Land of Uprightneſs. Quicken me, O Lord, for thy Names ſake, and perfect that which concerneth me: Thy Mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever, forſake not the works of thine own hands.

The despondent Thoughts of some newly awakened to a right sense of things.

I Have hitherto considered wherein True Religion doth consist, and how desirable a thing it is; but when one sees how infinitely distant the common temper and frame of men is from it, he may perhaps be ready to despond, and give over and think it utterly impossible to be attain'd: he may sit down in sadness, and bemoan himself and say in the anguish and bitterness of his spirit, "They are happy indeed whose Souls are awakened "unto the Divine Life, who are thus "renew'd in the spirit of their minds; "but alas! I am quite of another con-"stitution, and am not able to effe-"ctuate so mighty a change: if out-"ward observances could have done "the business, I might have hoped to "acquit my self by diligence and care; "but since nothing but a new Nature "can serve the turn, what am I able "to do? I could bestow all my Goods

"in

"in Oblations to God, or Alms to the
"Poor, but cannot command that
"Love and Charity, without which
"this expence would profit me no-
"thing: This gift of God cannot be Act. 8.20.
"purchaſed with money: if a man
"ſhould give all the ſubſtance of his
"houſe for love it would utterly be Cant. 8.7.
"contemned: I could pine and mace-
"rate my body, and undergo many
"hardſhips and troubles, but I cannot
"get all my corruptions ſtarved, nor
"my affections wholly wean'd from
"Earthly things: there is ſtill ſome
"worldly deſires lurking in my heart,
"and thoſe vanities that I have ſhut
"out of doors, are alwayes getting in
"by the windowes. I am many times
"convinced of my own meanneſs, of
"the weakneſs of my body, and the
"far greater weakneſs of my Soul;
"but this doth rather beget indigna-
"tion and diſcontent, than true hu-
"mility in my ſpirit: and though I
"ſhould come to think meanly of my
"ſelf, yet I cannot endure that others
"ſhould think ſo too. In a word, when
"I reflect on my higheſt and moſt ſpe-

"cious attainments, I have reaſon to "ſuſpect that they are all but the ef- "fects of Nature, the iſſues of Self- "love acting under ſeveral diſguiſes: "and this principle is ſo powerful and "ſo deeply rooted in me, that I can "never hope to be delivered from the "dominion of it: I may toſs and turn "as a door on the hinges, but can ne- "ver get clear off, or be quite un- "hing'd of Self, which is ſtill the cen- "ter of all my motions: So that all the "advantage I can draw from the diſ- "covery of Religion, is but to ſee at "a huge diſtance that felicity which "I am not able to reach; like a man "in a ſhipwrack, who diſcerns the "Land, and envies the happineſs of "thoſe who are there; but thinks "it impoſſible for himſelf to get "aſhoare.

The unreaſonableneſs of theſe Fears.

Theſe, I ſay, or ſuch like deſponding Thoughts may ariſe in the Minds of thoſe perſons who begin to conceive ſomewhat more of the Nature and Excellency of Religion than before: they have ſpy'd the Land, and ſeen that it's exceeding good, that it floweth with milk

milk and honey; but they find they have the Children of *Anak* to grapple with, many powerful luſts and corruptions to overcome, and they fear they ſhall never prevail againſt them. But why ſhould we give way to ſuch diſcouraging ſuggeſtions? why ſhould we entertain ſuch unreaſonable fears, which damp our ſpirits and weaken our hands, and augment the difficulties of our way? Let us encourage our ſelves, my dear Friend, let us encourage our ſelves with thoſe mighty aids we are to expect in this Spiritual Warfare, for greater is he that is for us, then all that can riſe up againſt us; *The Eternal God is our refuge*, and underneath are the Everlaſting Arms. Deut. 33. 27. *Let us be ſtrong in the Lord, and the power of his might*, for he it is that ſhall *tread down our Enemies*: God hath a tender regard unto the Souls of men, and is infinitely willing to promove their welfare: he hath condeſcended to our weakneſs, and declared with an Oath, that he hath no pleaſure in our deſtruction: There is no ſuch thing as deſpight or envy lodged in the Boſom

of that ever Bleſſed Being, whoſe Name and Nature is Love. He created us at firſt in a happy condition, and now when we are fallen from it, *he hath laid help upon One that is Mighty to Save*, hath committed the Care of our Souls to no meaner Perſon than the Eternal Son of his Love; It is he that is the Captain of our Salvation: and what Enemies can be too ſtrong for us, when we are fighting under his Banners. Did not the Son of God come down from the Boſom of his Father and pitch his Tabernacle amongſt the Sons of Men, that he might recover and propagate the Divine Life, and reſtore the Image of God in their Souls: All the Mighty Works which he perform'd, all the Sad Afflictions which he ſuſtain'd had this for their ſcope and deſign, for this did he labour and toil, for this did he bleed and dye: *He was with child, he was in pain, and hath he brought forth nothing but wind, hath he wrought no deliverance in the Earth? Shall he not ſee of the travel of his Soul?* Certainly it is impoſſible that this Great Contrivance of Heaven ſhould prove

Pſal. 89. 19.

Eſay 26. ver. 19.

Eſay 53. ver. 11.

prove abortive, that ſuch a mighty undertaking ſhould fail and miſcarry: It hath already been effectual for the Salvation of many Thouſands, who were once as far from the Kingdom of Heaven as we can ſuppoſe our ſelves to be, and our *High Prieſt continueth for ever, and is able to ſave them to the uttermoſt that come unto God by him*: He is tender and compaſſionate, he knoweth our infirmities, and had experience of our temptations, *A bruiſed reed will he not break, and a ſmoaking flax will he not quench, till he ſend forth Judgment unto victory.* He hath ſent out his Holy Spirit, whoſe ſweet but powerful breathings are ſtill moving up and down in the World, to quicken and revive the Souls of men, and awaken them unto the Senſe and feeling of thoſe Divine things for which they were made, and is ready to aſſiſt ſuch weak and languiſhing Creatures as we are in our Eſſay's towards holineſs and felicity: and when once it hath taken hold of a Soul, and kindled in it the ſmalleſt ſpark of Divine Love, it will be ſure to preſerve and cheriſh, and

Heb. 7.24, 25.

Matth. 12. 20.

of that ever Bleſſed Being, whoſe Name and Nature is Love. He created us at firſt in a happy condition, and now when we are fallen from it, *he hath laid help upon One that is Mighty to Save*, hath committed the Care of our Souls to no meaner Perſon than the Eternal Son of his Love; It is he that is the Captain of our Salvation: and what Enemies can be too ſtrong for us, when we are fighting under his Banners. Did not the Son of God come down from the Boſom of his Father and pitch his Tabernacle amongſt the Sons of Men, that he might recover and propagate the Divine Life, and reſtore the Image of God in their Souls: All the Mighty Works which he perform'd, all the Sad Afflictions which he ſuſtain'd had this for their ſcope and deſign, for this did he labour and toil, for this did he bleed and dye: *He was with child, he was in pain, and hath he brought forth nothing but wind, hath he wrought no deliverance in the Earth? Shall he not ſee of the travel of his Soul?* Certainly it is impoſſible that this Great Contrivance of Heaven ſhould prove

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bring it forth into a flame, which many waters shall not quench, neither shall the floods be able to drown it: when ever this day begins to dawn, and the *Day-Star to arise in the heart*, it will easily dispel the powers of darkness, and make ignorance and folly, and all the corrupt and selfish affections of men flee away as fast before it as the shades of the Night, when the Sun cometh out of his Chambers: for *the path of the Just is as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day*: *They shall go on from strength to strength, till every one of them appear before God in Sion.*

Cant. 8 7.

2 Pet. 1. 19.

Prov. 4. 18.

Psal 84 7.

Why should we think it impossible that True Goodness and Universal Love should ever come to sway and prevail in our Souls? Is not this their Primitive state and condition, their native and genuine constitution as they came first from the hands of their Maker. Sin and corruption are but usurpers, and though they have long kept the possession, yet *from the beginning it was not so.* That inordinate Self-love which one would think were rooted

rooted in our very being, and interwoven with the conſtitution of our Nature, is nevertheleſs of forraign extraction, and had no place at all in the ſtate of integrity: we have ſtill ſo much reaſon left us to condemn it: our Underſtandings are eaſily convinced that we ought to be wholly devoted to him from whom we have our being, and to love him infinitely more than our ſelves, who is infinitely better than we, and our wills would readily comply with this, if they were not diſordered and put out of tune: and is not he who made our Souls able to rectifie and mend them again? Shall we not be able by his aſſiſtance to vanquiſh and expel thoſe violent intruders, *and turn unto flight the Arms of the Aliens.* Heb. 11. 34.

No ſooner ſhall we take up Arms in this holy Warr, but we ſhall have all the Saints on Earth, and all the Angels in Heaven engaged on our party: the holy Church throughout the World is daily interceding with God for the ſucceſs of all ſuch endeavours, and doubtleſs thoſe heavenly Hoſts above are

are nearly concerned in the Intereſts of Religion, and infinitely deſirous to ſee the Divine Life thriving and prevailing in this inferiour World; and that the Will of God may be done by us on Earth, as it is done by themſelves in Heaven: and may we not then encourage our ſelves as the Prophet did his Servant, when he ſhewed him the Horſes and Chariors of fire, *Fear not, for they that be with us are more then they that be againſt us.*

2 King. 6. 16, 17.

We muſt do what we can, and depend on the Divine aſſiſtance. 1 Chron. 22. 16.

Away then with all perplexing fears and deſponding thoughts: to undertake vigorouſly, and rely confidently on the Divine aſſiſtance is more than half the conqueſt: *Let us ariſe and be doing, and the Lord will be with us.* It is true Religion in the Souls of men is the immediate work of God, and all our natural endeavours can neither produce it alone, nor merit thoſe ſupernatural aids by which it muſt be wrought: The Holy Ghoſt muſt come upon us, and the power of the Higheſt muſt overſhadow us, before that holy thing can be begotten and Chriſt be formed in us: but yet we muſt not expect

pect that this whole work ſhould be done without any concurring endeavours of ours: we muſt not lye loitering in the ditch and wait till Omnipotence pull us from thence: no, no, we muſt beſtir our ſelves and actuate theſe powers which we have already received: We muſt put forth our ſelves in our utmoſt capacities, and then we may hope that *our Labour ſhall not be in vain in the Lord.* All the art and induſtry of Man cannot form the ſmalleſt herb, or make a ſtalk of Corn to grow in the field; it is the energy of Nature, and the influences of Heaven which produce this effect; it is God *who cauſeth the graſs to grow, and herb for the ſervice of man*; and yet no body will ſay that the Labours of the Husband-man are uſeleſs or unneceſſary: So likewiſe the humane Soul is immediately created by God; it is he who both formeth and enliveneth the child, and yet he hath appointed the Marriage-bed as the ordinary mean for the propagation of Mankind. Though there muſt intervene a ſtroak of Omnipotence to effectuate this mighty change

1 Cor. 15. 58.

Pſal. 104. 14.

change in our Souls; yet ought we to do what we can to fit and prepare our ſelves, for we muſt break up our
Jer. 4. 3. fallow ground and root out the weeds, and pull up the thorns, that ſo we may be the more ready to receive the Seeds of Grace and the Dew of Heaven. It is true, God hath been found of ſome who ſought him not; he hath caſt himſelf in their way who were quite out of his; he hath laid hold upon them, and ſtopt their courſe on a ſudden; for ſo was S. *Paul* converted in his Journey to *Damaſcus*: but certainly this is not God's ordinary method of dealing with men, though he hath not ty'd himſelf to means, yet he hath tyed us to the uſe of them; and we have never more reaſon to expect the Divine aſſiſtance, but when we are doing our utmoſt endeavours. It ſhall therefore be my next work to ſhew what courſe we ought to take for attaining that bleſſed temper I have hitherto deſcribed. But here if in delivering my own thoughts, I ſhall chance to differ any thing from what is or may be ſaid by others in this matter, I would not be

be therefore thought to contradict and oppoſe them, more than Phyſitians do when they preſcribe ſeveral Remedies for the ſame Diſeaſe, which perhaps are all uſeful and good: Every one may propoſe the Method which he judgeth moſt proper and convenient, but he doth not thereby pretend that the Cure can never be effectuated, unleſs that be exactly obſerved: I doubt it hath occaſioned much unneceſſary diſquietude to ſome holy perſons, that they have not found ſuch a regular and orderly tranſaction in their Souls, as they have ſeen deſcribed in Books; that they have not paſſed through all thoſe ſteps and ſtages of Converſion, which ſome, who perhaps have felt them in themſelves, have too peremptorily preſcribed unto others: God hath ſeveral wayes of dealing with the Souls of men, and it ſufficeth if the work be accompliſh'd, whatever the Methods have been.

Again, Though in propoſing Directions, I muſt follow that order which the nature of things ſhall lead to; yet I do not mean that the ſame method

method ſhould be ſo punctually obſerved in the practiſe, as if the later Rules were never to be heeded till ſome conſiderable time have been ſpent in practiſing the former: The Directions I intend be mutually conducive one to another, and are all to be perform'd as occaſion ſhall ſerve, and we find our ſelves inabled to perform them.

We muſt ſhun all manner of Sin.

But now that I may detain you no longer, if we deſire to have our Souls moulded to this holy frame, to become partakers of the Divine Nature, and have Chriſt formed in our hearts, we muſt ſeriouſly reſolve and carefully endeavour to evite and abandon all Vitious and Sinful practiſes. There can be no Treaty of Peace, till once we lay down theſe weapons of Rebellion wherewith we fight againſt Heaven: nor can we expect to have our diſtempers cured, if we be daily feeding on poyſon: Every wilful ſin, gives a mortal wound to the Soul, and puts it at a greater diſtance from God and goodneſs; and we can never hope to have our hearts purified from corrupt affections,

affections, unleſs we cleanſe our hands from vitious actions. Now in this caſe we cannot excuſe our ſelves by the pretence of impoſſibility; for ſure our outward man is ſome way in our power, we have ſome command of our feet and hands, and tongue, nay and of our thoughts and fancies too, at leaſt ſo far as to divert them from impure and ſinful objects, and to turn our Mind another way: and we ſhould find this power and authority much ſtrengthned and advanced, if we were careful to manage and exerciſe it. Mean while I acknowledge our corruptions are ſo ſtrong, and our temptations ſo many, that it will require a great deal of ſteadfaſtneſs and reſolution, of watchfulneſs and care to preſerve our ſelves even in this degree of Innocence and Purity.

We muſt know what things are ſinful.

And firſt let us inform our ſelves well, what thoſe Sins are from which we ought to abſtain. And here we muſt not take our meaſures from the Maxims of the World, or the practiſes of thoſe whom in charity we account good

good men: moſt people have very light apprehenſions of theſe things, and are not ſenſible of any fault unleſs it be groſs and flagitious, and ſcarce reckon any ſo great as that which they call Preciſeneſs: and thoſe who are more ſerious, do many times allow them ſelves too great latitude and freedom: Alas! how much Pride and Vanity, and Paſſion, and Humour, how much weakneſs and folly and ſin doth every day bewray it ſelf in their converſe and behaviour: It may be they are humbled for it, and ſtriving againſt it, and are daily gaining ſome ground; but then the progreſs is ſo ſmall, and their failings ſo many, that we had need to chooſe an exacter Pattern. Every one of us muſt anſwer for himſelf, and the practiſes of others will never warrant and ſecure us: It is the higheſt folly to regulate our Actions by any other ſtandard, than that by which they muſt be Judged: If ever we would *cleanſe our way*, it muſt be *by taking heed thereto according to the Word of God*: and that *Word which is quick and powerful, and ſharper*

Pſal. 119. 9.

then

then any edged ſword, piercing even to the dividing aſſunder of ſoul and ſpirit, and of the joynts and marrow, and is a diſcerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart, will certainly diſcover many things to be ſinful and heynous, which paſs for very innocent in the eyes of the World: Let us therefore imitate the Pſalmiſt, who ſaith, *Concerning the works of men, by the words of thy lips, I have kept my ſelf from the path of the deſtroyer.* Let us acquaint our ſelves well, with the ſtrict and holy Laws of our Religion: Let us conſider the Diſcourſes of our Bleſſed Saviour, (eſpecially that Divine Sermon on the Mount) and the Writings of his holy Apoſtles, where an ingenuous and unbyaſſed Mind may clearly diſcern thoſe limits and bounds by which our actions ought to be confined. And then let us never look upon any Sin as light and inconſiderable; but be fully perſwaded, that the ſmalleſt is infinitely heynous in the ſight of God, and prejudicial to the Souls of Men; and that if we had the right ſenſe of things, we would be deeply affected with the leaſt

Heb. 4. 12.

Pſal. 17. 4.

Irregularities, than now we are with the greateſt Crimes.

We muſt reſiſt the Temptations to Sin, by conſidering the Evils they will draw on us.

But now amongſt thoſe things which we diſcover to be ſinful, there will be ſome, unto which, through the diſpoſition of our Nature, or long cuſtome, or the indearments of pleaſure, we are ſo much wedded, that it will be like the cutting off the right hand, or pulling out the right eye, to abandon them. But muſt we therefore ſit down and wait till all difficulties be over, and every temptation be gone: this were to imitate the fool in the Poet, who ſtood the whole day at the River ſide till all the water ſhould run by. We muſt not indulge our inclinations, as we do little Children, till they grow weary of the thing they are unwilling to let go: We muſt not continue our ſinful practiſes in hope that the Divine Grace will one day overpower our ſpirits, and make us hate them for their own deformity.

Let us ſuppoſe the worſt, that we are utterly deſtitute of any Supernatural Principle, and want that taſte by which

which we ſhould diſcern and abhor perverſe things; yet ſure we are capable of ſome conſiderations which may be of force to perſwade us to this reformation of our lives: If the inward deformity and heynous nature of Sin cannot affect us; at leaſt we may be frighted by thoſe dreadful conſequences that attend it: That ſame ſelfiſh principle which puſheth us forward unto the purſuit of ſinful Pleaſures, will make us loath to buy them at the rate of everlaſting miſery: Thus we may encounter Self-love with its own weapons, and imploy one natural inclination for repreſſing the exorbitancies of another. Let us therefore accuſtom our ſelves to conſider ſeriouſly what a fearful thing it muſt needs be to irritate and offend that infinite Being on whom we hang and depend every moment, who needs but to withdraw his Mercies to make us miſerable; or his aſſiſtance to make us nothing: Let us frequently remember the ſhortneſs and uncertainty of our lives, and how that after we have taken a few turns more in the

World, and converſed a little longer amongſt men, we muſt all go down unto the dark and ſilent graves, and carry nothing along but anguiſh and regret of all our Sinful enjoyments, and then think what horror muſt needs ſeize the guilty Soul, to find it ſelf naked and all alone before the Severe and Impartial Judge of the world, to render an exact account not only of its more important and conſiderable tranſactions; but of every word that the Tongue hath uttered, and the ſwifteſt and moſt ſecret thought that ever paſſed through the Mind. Let us ſometimes repreſent unto our ſelves the terrors of that dreadful day, when the foundations of the Earth ſhall be ſhaken, and the Heavens ſhall paſs away with a great noiſe, and the Elements ſhall melt with fervent heat, and the preſent frame of Nature be diſſolved, and our Eyes ſhall ſee the Bleſſed Jeſus who came onee into the World in all Humility to viſit us, to purchaſe pardon for us, and beſeech us to accept of it, now appearing in the Majeſty of his glory, and deſcending from Heaven

2 Pet. 3. 10.

in

in a flaming fire to take vengeance on those that have despised his Mercy, and perished in rebellion against him: when all the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light, and the counsels of the heart shall be made manifest: when those secret impurities and subtile frauds whereof the World did never suspect us, shall be exposed and laid open to Publick view, and many thousand actions which we never dreamed to be sinful, or else had altogether forgotten, shall be charged home upon our Consciences with such evident convictions of guilt, that we shall neither be able to deny nor excuse them. Then shall all the Angels in Heaven, and all the Saints that ever liv'd on the Earth approve that dreadful Sentence which shall be passed on wicked men, and those who perhaps did love and esteem them when they liv'd in the World, shall look upon them with indignation and abhorrence, and never make one request for their deliverance. Let us consider the Eternal punishments of damned Souls which are shadowed forth in Scripture by

1 Cor. 4. 5.

Metaphors taken from those things that are most terrible and grievous in the World, and yet all doth not suffice to conveigh unto our Minds any full apprehension of them: when we have joyned together the importance of all these expressions, and added unto them whatever our fancy can conceive of Misery and Torment, we must still remember that all this comes infinitely short of the truth and the reality of the thing.

It's true, this is a sad and melancholy subject, there is anguish and horror in the consideration of it; but sure it must be infinitely more dreadful to endure it; and such thoughts as these may be very useful to fright us from the courses that would lead us thither, how fond soever we may be of sinful pleasures, the fear of Hell would make us abstain: our most forward inclinations will startle and give back when pressed with that Question in the Prophet, *Who amongst us shall dwell with everlasting burnings.* Isa. 33. 14.

To this very purpose it is that the terrors of another World are so frequently

quently repreſented in holy Writ, and that in ſuch terms as are moſt proper to affect and influence a carnal Mind: Theſe fears can never ſuffice to make any perſon truly good; but certainly they may reſtrain us from much Evil, and have often made way for more ingenuous and kindly impreſſions.

We muſt keep a conſtant watch over our ſelves.

But it will not ſuffice to conſider thoſe things once and again, nor to form reſolutions of abandoning our ſins, unleſs we maintain a conſtant guard, and be continually watching againſt them. Sometimes the Mind is awakened to ſee the diſmal conſequences of a Vitious life, and ſtraight we are reſolved to reform: but alas! it preſently falleth aſleep, and we loſe that proſpect which we had of things, and then temptations take the advantage, they ſolicite and importune us continually, and ſo do frequently engage our conſent before we are aware. It is the folly and ruine of moſt people that they live at adventure, and take part in every thing that comes in their way, ſeldom conſidering what they are about to ſay or do: If we would

have our resolution take effect, we must take heed unto our ways, and set a watch unto the door of our lips, and examine the motions that arise in our heart, cause them tell us whence they come, and whither they go; whether it be Pride or Passion, or any corrupt and vitious humour that prompteth us to any design, and whether God will be offended, or any body harmed by it. And if we have no time for long reasonings, let us at least turn our eyes toward God, and place our selves in his Presence to ask his leave and approbation for what we do: Let us consider our selves under the All-seeing Eye of that Divine Majesty, as in the midst of an infinite Globe of light, which compasseth us about both behind and before, and pierceth to the innermost corners of our Soul: the Sense and remembrance of the Divine Presence, is the most ready and effectual mean, both to discover what is unlawful, and to restrain us from it: There are some things a person could have a shift to palliate or defend, and yet he dares not look Almighty God in

in the face and adventure upon them. If we look into him we ſhall be lightned; if we *ſet him alwayes before us*, he will *guide us by his Eye, and inſtruct us in the way wherein we ought to walk.*

This Care and Watchfulneſs over our Actions, muſt be ſeconded by frequent and ſerious reflections upon them, not only that we may obtain the Divine Mercy and Pardon for our Sins, by an humble and ſorrowful acknowledgment of them; but alſo that we may reinforce and ſtrengthen our reſolutions, and learn to decline or reſiſt the temptations, by which we have been formerly foyl'd. It is an advice worthy of a Chriſtian, though it did firſt drop from a Heathen Pen; That before we betake our ſelves to reſt, we renew and examine all the paſſages of the day, that we may have the comfort of what we have done aright, and may redreſs what we find to have been amiſs, and make the ſhipwracks of one day be as marks to direct our courſe in another. This may be called the very art of Virtuous living, and would contribute

We muſt often examine our Actions.

tribute wonderfully to advance our reformation, and preſerve our innocency. But withall we muſt not forget to implore the Divine aſſiſtance, eſpecially againſt thoſe Sins that do moſt eaſily beſet us: and though it be ſuppoſed that our hearts are not yet moulded unto that Spiritual frame, which ſhould render our Devotions acceptable, yet methinks ſuch conſiderations as have been propoſed to deter us from Sin, may alſo ſtir us up to ſome natural ſeriouſneſs, and make our Prayers againſt it as earneſt at leaſt, as they are wont to be againſt other Calamities: and I doubt not God who heareth the cry of the Ravens, will have ſome regard even to ſuch Petitions as proceed from thoſe natural Paſſions which himſelf hath implanted in us: beſides that thoſe Prayers againſt Sin will be powerful engagements on our ſelves to excite us to watchfulneſs and care, and common ingenuity will make us aſham'd to relapſe unto thoſe faults, which we have lately regrated before God, and againſt which we have begged his aſſiſtance.

Thus

Thus are we to make the firſt eſſay for recovering the Divine Life, by reſtraining the natural inclinations that they break not out into ſinful practiſes: but now I muſt add, that Chriſtian Prudence will teach us to abſtain from gratifications that are not ſimply unlawful, and that not only, that we may ſecure our innocence, which would be in continual hazard, if we ſhould ſtrain our liberty to the utmoſt point, and be always walking on the Marches, but alſo that hereby we may weaken the forces of Nature, and teach our appetites to obey; we muſt do with our ſelves as prudent Parents with their Children, who croſs their wills in many little indifferent things, to make them manageable and ſubmiſſive in more conſiderable inſtances: he who would mortifie the pride and vanity of his ſpirit, ſhould ſtop his ears to the moſt deſerved praiſes, and ſometimes forbear his juſt vindication, from the Cenſures and aſperſions of others, eſpecially if they reflect only upon his prudence and conduct, and not on his Virtue and Inno-

It is fit to reſtrain our ſelves in many lawful things.

Innocence: He who would check a vindictive humour, would do well to deny himself the Satisfaction of representing unto others the Injuries which he hath sustain'd; and if we would so take heed to our ways, that we sin not with our tongue, we must accustome our selves much to solitude and silence, and sometimes with the Psalmist *Hold our peace even from good*, till once we have gotten some command of that unruly member. Thus, I say, we may bind up our natural inclinations, and make our appetites more moderate in their cravings, by accustoming them to frequent refusals: but it is not enough to have them under violence, and restraint.

We must strive to put our selves out of love with the World.

Our next Essay must be to wean our affections from created things, and all the delights and entertainments of the lower life, which sink and depress the Souls of men, and retard their motions toward God and Heaven: And this we must do by possessing our Minds with a deep perswasion of the vanity and emptiness of worldly enjoyments. This is an ordinary theme, and

and every body can make declamations upon it; but alas! how few underſtand and believe what they ſay: Theſe Notions float in our Brains, and come ſliding off our Tongues, but we have no deep impreſſion of them on our ſpirits, we feel not the truth which we pretend to believe: We can tell that all the glory and ſplendour, all the pleaſures and enjoyments of the World, are vanity and nothing; and yet theſe nothings take up all our thoughts, and ingroſs all our affections, they ſtifle the better inclinations of our Soul, and inveigle us into many a Sin: it may be in a ſober mood, we give them the ſlight, and reſolve to be no longer deluded with them; but theſe thoughts ſeldom out-live the next temptation, the vanities which we have ſhut out at the door get in at a poſtern: there are ſtill ſome pretenſions, ſome hopes that flatter us; and after we have been fruſtrated a thouſand times, we muſt continually be repeating the experiment: The leaſt difference of circumſtances is enough to delude us, and make us expect that

ſatis-

ſatisfaction in one thing, which we have miſſed in another: but could we once get clearly off, and come to a real and ſerious contempt of worldly things, this were a very conſiderable advancement in our way: The Soul of Man is of a vigorous and active nature, and hath in it a raging and unextinguiſhable thirſt, an immaterial kind of fire, always catching at ſome object or other, in conjunction wherewith it thinks to be happy; and were it once rent from the World, and all the bewitching enjoyments under the Sun, it would quickly ſearch after ſome higher and more excellent Object, to ſatisfie its ardent, and importunate cravings, and being no longer dazel'd with gliſtering vanities, would fix on that Supream and All-ſufficient Good, where it ſhould diſcover ſuch beauty and ſweetneſs as would charm and over-power all its affections: The love of the World, and the love of God, are like the ſcales of a ballance, as the one falleth, the other doth riſe: when our natural inclinations proſper, and the creature is exalted in our Soul,

Religion

Religion is faint, and doth languiſh; but when earthly objects wither away, and loſe their beauty, and the Soul begins to cool and flagg in its proſecution of them, then the ſeeds of Grace take root, and the Divine Life begins to flouriſh and prevail. It doth therefore nearly concern us to convince our ſelves of the emptineſs and vanity of Creature-enjoyments, and reaſon our heart out of love of them: let us Seriouſly conſider all that our Reaſon or our Faith, our own Experience, or the obſervation of others can ſuggeſt to this effect. Let us ponder the matter over and over, and fix our thoughts on this truth, till we become really perſwaded of it: amidſt all our purſuits and deſigns, let us ſtop and ask our ſelves, For what end is all this? At what do I aim? Can the groſs and muddy pleaſures of Senſe, or a heap of white or yellow Earth, or the eſteem and affection of ſilly creatures like my ſelf ſatisfie a rational and immortal Soul? Have I not tryed theſe things already? Will they have a higher reliſh, and yield me more contentment

to

to morrow than yeſterday, or the next year than they did the laſt? There may be ſome little difference betwixt that which I am now purſuing, & that which I enjoy'd before; but ſure my former Enjoyments did ſhew as pleaſant, and promiſe as fair before I attain'd them: like the Rain-bow they looked very glorious at a diſtance, but when I approached, I found nothing but emptineſs and vapor. O what a poor thing ſhould the life of man be, if it were capable of no higher enjoyments!

I cannot inſiſt on this ſubject, and there is the leſs need when I remember to whom I am writing. Yes (my dear Friend) you have had as great Experience of the emptineſs and vanity of humane things, and have at preſent as few worldly engagements as any that I know: I have ſometimes reflected on thoſe paſſages of your life wherewith you have been pleaſed to acquaint me: and methinks through all I can diſcern a deſign of the Divine Providence to wean your affections from every thing here below: The

Tryals

Tryals you have had of thoſe things which the World dotes upon, hath taught you to deſpiſe them, and you have found by experience that neither the endowments of Nature, nor the advantages of Fortune are ſufficient for happineſs: that every Roſe hath its thorn, and there may be a Worm at the root of the faireſt Gourd, ſome ſecret and undiſcerned grief which may make a perſon deſerve the pity of thoſe who perhaps do admire or envy their ſuppoſed felicity: If any earthly comforts have got too much of your heart, I think they have been your Relations and Friends, and the deareſt of thoſe are removed out of the World, ſo that you muſt raiſe your Mind towards Heaven, when you would think upon them: Thus God hath provided that your heart may be looſed from the World, and he may not have any Rival in your affection, which I have alwayes obſerved to be ſo large and unbounded, ſo noble and diſ-intereſſed, that no inferiour object can anſwer or deſerve it.

We must do those outward Actions that are commanded.

When we have got our corruptions restrain'd, and our natural appetites and inclinations towards worldly things in some measure subdued, we must proceed to such exercises as have a more immediate tendance to excite and awaken the Divine Life: And first let us endeavour conscientiously to perform those duties which Religion doth require, and whereunto it would incline us if it did prevail in our Souls: If we cannot get our inward disposition presently changed, let us study at least to regulate our outward deportment: if our hearts be not yet inflam'd with Divine Love, let us however own our alleagiance to that infinite Majesty, by attending his Service, and listening to his Word, by speaking reverently of his Name, and praising his goodness, and exhorting others to serve and obey him: if we want that charity and those bowels of compassion which we ought to have towards our Neighbours, yet must we not omit any occasion of doing them good: If our hearts be haughty and proud,

proud, we muſt nevertheleſs ſtudy a modeſt and humble Deportment: Theſe external performances are of little value in themſelves, yet may they help us forward to better things: The Apoſtle indeed telleth us, *that bodily exerciſe profiteth little*; but he ſeems not to affirm that it is altogether uſeleſs, it is alwayes good to be doing what we can, for then God is wont to pity our weakneſs, and aſſiſt our feeble endeavours: and when true Charity and Humility and other Graces of the Divine Spirit come to take root in our Souls, they will actuate themſelves more freely and with the leſs difficulty that we have been accuſtomed to expreſs them in our outward converſations. Nor need we fear the imputation of hypocriſie, tho our actions do thus ſomewhat out-run our affections, ſeeing they do ſtill proceed from a ſenſe of our Duty, and our Deſign is not to appear better then we are, but that we may really become ſo.

We must endeavour to form internal Acts of Devotion, Charity, &c.

But as inward acts have a more immediate influence on the Soul to mould it to a right temper and frame, ſo ought we to be moſt frequent and ſedulous in the exerciſe of thoſe. Let us be often lifting up our hearts towards God; and if we do not ſay that we love him above all things, let us at leaſt acknowledg that it is our Duty and would be our Happineſs ſo to do: Let us regrate the diſhonour done unto him by fooliſh and ſinful men, and applaud the Praiſes and Adorations that are given him by that Bleſſed and Glorious Company above: Let us reſign and yield our ſelves up unto him a thouſand times to be governed by his Lawes, and diſpoſed upon at his pleaſure: and though our ſtubborn hearts ſhould ſtart back and refuſe, yet let us tell him we are convinced that his Will is alwayes Juſt and Good, and therefore deſire him to do with us whatſoever he pleaſeth whether we will or not. And ſo, for begetting in us an univerſal Charity towards men, we muſt be frequently putting up wiſhes

wiſhes for their happineſs, and bleſſing every perſon that we ſee; and when we have done any thing for the relief of the miſerable, we may ſecond it with earneſt deſires that God would take care of them, and deliver them out of all their diſtreſſes.

Thus ſhould we exerciſe our ſelves unto godlineſs, and when we are imploying the powers that we have, the Spirit of God is wont to ſtrike in, and elevate theſe acts of our Soul beyond the pitch of Nature, and give them a Divine impreſſion: and after the frequent reiteration of theſe we will find our ſelves more inclined unto them, they flowing with greater freedom and eaſe.

Conſideration a great inſtrument of Religion.

I ſhall mention but two other Means for begetting that Holy and Divine temper of ſpirit, which is the Subject of the preſent Diſcourſe: And the firſt is a Deep and Serious Conſideration of the Truths of our Religion, and that both as to the certainty and importance of them. The aſſent which is ordinarily given to Divine Truths is very faint and languid, very weak and

uneffectual, flowing only from a blind inclination to follow that Religion which is in the fashion, or a lazy indifferency and unconcernedness whether things be so or not: Men are unwilling to quarrel with the Religion of their Countrey, and since all their Neighbours are Christians, they are content to be so too: but they are seldome at the pains to consider the evidences of those Truths, or to ponder the importance and tendency of them: and thence it is that they have so little influence on their affections and practise: Those *spiritless and paralitick thoughts* (as one doth rightly term them) are not able to move the will, and direct the hand. We must therefore endeavour to work up our Minds to a Serious belief and full perswasion of Divine Truths, unto a Sense and feeling of Spiritual things: Our thoughts must dwell upon them till we be both convinced of them, and deeply affected with them: Let us urge forward our spirits, and make them approach the invisible World, and fix our Mind upon immaterial things,

things, till we clearly perceive that theſe are no Dreams, nay that all things are Dreams and Shadows beſides them: When we look about us and behold the beauty and magnificence of this goodly frame, the order and harmony of the whole Creation, let our thoughts from thence take their flight toward that Omnipotent Wiſdom and Goodneſs which did at firſt produce, and doth ſtill eſtabliſh and uphold the ſame: When we reflect upon our ſelves, let us conſider that we are not a meer piece of Organized matter, a curious and well-contrived Engine, that there is more in us then fleſh, and blood, and bones, even a Divine ſparkle, capable to know, and love, and enjoy our Maker; and tho it be now exceedingly clogged with its dull and lumpiſh companion, yet ere long it ſhall be delivered, and can ſubſiſt without the body, as well as that can do without the Cloathes which we throw off at our pleaſure. Let us often withdraw our thoughts from this Earth, this Scene of Miſery and folly and ſin, and raiſe them to-

wards that more vaſt and glorious World, whoſe Innocent and Bleſſed Inhabitants ſolace themſelves Eternally in the Divine Preſence, and know no other paſſion, but an unmixed Joy, and an unbounded Love: and then conſider how the bleſſed Son of God came down to this lower World to live among us and dye for us, that he might bring us to a portion of the ſame felicity; and think how he hath overcome the ſharpneſs of death, and opened the Kingdom of Heaven to all Believers, and is now ſet down on the *right hand of Majeſty on high*, and yet is not the leſs mindful of us, but receiveth our Prayers, and preſenteth them unto his Father, and is daily viſiting his Church with the Influences of his Spirit, as the Sun reacheth us with his Beams.

Heb. 1. 3.

To beget Divine Love, we muſt conſider the excellency of the Divine Nature.

The Serious and frequent conſiderarion of theſe and ſuch other Divine Truths, is the moſt proper Method to beget that lively Faith which is the Foundation of Religion, the ſpring and root of the Divine Life. Let me further ſuggeſt ſome particular ſubjects of

of Meditation for producing the Several branches of it. And first to inflame our Souls with the love of God, let us consider the excellency of his Nature, and his Love and Kindness towards us. It is little we know of the Divine Perfections, and yet that little may suffice to fill our Souls with admiration and Love, to ravish our affections as well as to raise our Wonder, for we are not meerly Creatures of Sense that we should be uncapable of any other affection but that which entreth by the Eyes: The character of any excellent Person whom we have never seen will many times ingage our Hearts, and make us hugely concerued in all his adventures: and what is it I pray you that engages us so much to those with whom we converse? I cannot think that it is meerly the colour of their face, or their comely proportions, else we should fall in Love with statues and pictures, and flowers: these outward accomplishments may a little delight the Eye, but would never be able to prevail so much on the Heart, if they did not represent

preſent ſome vital Perfection: we either ſee or apprehend ſome greatneſs of mind or vigor of Spirit, or ſweetneſs of diſpoſition, ſome ſprightlineſs or Wiſdom or Goodneſs which charms our ſpirit and commands our Love: now theſe perfections are not obvious to the Sight, the Eyes can only diſcern the ſigns and effects of them: and if it be the underſtanding that directs the affection, and vital perfections prevail with it, certainly the excellency's of the Divine Nature (the Traces whereof we cannot but diſcover in every thing we behold) would not fail to engage our Hearts if we did ſeriouſly view and regard them: ſhall we not be Infinitely more tranſported with that Almighty Wiſdom and Goodneſs which filleth the Univerſe, and diſplays it ſelf in all the parts of the creation, which eſtabliſheth the Frame of Nature, and turneth the mighty Wheels of Providence, and keepeth the World from diſorder and ruine; then with the faint rays of the ſame perfections which we meet with in our fellow-creatures? Shall we doat on the ſcattered

tered pieces of a rude and imperfect picture, and never be affected with the original beauty? This were an unaccountable ſtupidity and blindneſs: whatever we find lovely in a friend or in a Saint ought not to engroſs but to Elevate our affection: we ſhould conclude with our ſelves, that if there be ſo much ſweetneſs in a drop, there muſt be Infinitely more in the Fountain; if there be ſo much ſplendor in a ray, what muſt the Sun be in its Glory?

Nor can we pretend the remoteneſs of the object, as if God were at too great a diſtance for our converſe or our Love: *he is not far from every one of us, for in him we live and move and have our being:* we cannot open our Eyes, but we muſt behold ſome veſtige of his Glory, and we cannot turn them toward him, but we ſhall be ſure to find his intent upon us, waiting as it were to catch a look ready to intertain the moſt intimate fellowſhip and communion with us. Let us therefore indeavour to raiſe our minds to the cleareſt conceptions of the Divine Nature: Act. 17. 27.

Nature: Let us consider all that his works do declare or his Word doth discover of him unto us, and let us especially contemplate that visible representation of him which was made in our own Nature by his Son; who was
Heb. 1. 3. *the brightness of his Glory, and the express Image of his Person*, and who appeared in the World to discover at once what God is, and what we ought to be: Let us represent him unto our minds as we find him described in the Gospel; & there we shall behold the Perfections of the Divine Nature though covered with the vail of humane Infirmities: and when we have fram'd unto our selves the clearest Notion that we can of a Being Infinite in Power, in Wisdom, and Goodness, the Author and Fountain of all Perfections,
Lam. 3. 41. let us fix the Eyes of our Soul upon it,
Psal. 39. 3. that our Eyes may affect our Heart, and while we are Musing the fire will burn.

We should meditate on his Goodness and Love. Especially if hereunto we add the consideration of Gods Favour and Good-will towards us: nothing is more Powerfull to engage our affection

on then to find that we are beloved: expreſſions of Kindneſs are alwayes pleaſing and acceptable unto us, though the perſon ſhould be otherways mean and contemptible: but to have the love of one who is altogether lovely, to know that the Glorious Majeſty of Heaven hath any regard unto us, how muſt it aſtoniſh and delight us, how muſt it overcome our Spirits, and melt our Hearts, and put our whole Soul unto a Flame. Now as the Word of God is full of the expreſſions of his Love towards Man, ſo all his Works do loudly proclaim it: he gave us our being, and by preſerving us in it, doth renew the donation every moment: he hath placed us in a rich and well furniſhed World, and liberally provided for all our neceſſities: he raineth down bleſſings from Heaven upon us, and cauſeth the Earth to bring forth our proviſion: he giveth us our Food and Raiment, and while we are ſpending the productions of one year, he is preparing for us againſt another: he ſweetneth our lives with innumerable comforts, and gratifieth every

every faculty with ſuitable objects: The Eye of his Providence is alwaies upon us, and he watcheth for our ſafety when we are faſt a ſleep, neither minding him, nor our ſelves. But leaſt we ſhould think theſe Teſtimonles of his kindneſs leſs conſiderable becauſe they are the eaſie iſſues of his Omnipotent Power, and do not put him into any trouble or pain, he hath taken a more wonderful Method to endear himſelf to us: he hath teſtified his affection to us, by ſuffering as well as by doing; and becauſe he could not ſuffer in his own Nature, he aſſumed ours: The Eternal Son of God, did cloath himſelf with the Infirmities of our fleſh, and left the companie of thoſe Innocent and Bleſſed Spirits, who knew well how to Love and adore him, that he might dwell among Men, and wreſtle with the obſtinacy of that rebellious race, to reduce them to their Alleagiance and felicity and then to offer himſelf up as a Sacrifice and Propitiation for them. I remember one of the Poets hath an Ingenious fancy to Expreſs the Paſſion wherewith he found

found himſelf overcome after a long reſiſtance, that the god of Love had ſhot all his Golden arrowes at him, but could never pierce his Heart, till at length he put himſelf unto the bow and darted himſelf ſtraight into his breaſt: Methinks this doth ſome way adumbrate Gods Method of dealing with Men: he had long contended with a ſtubborn World, and thrown down many a bleſſing upon them, and when all his other gifts could not prevail, he at laſt made a Gift of himſelf, to teſtifie his affection, and conciliate theirs. The account which we have of our Saviours Life in the Goſpel doth all along preſent us with the ſtory of his Love, all the pains that he took and the troubles that he endured were the wonderfull effects and uncontrollable evidences of it. But O that laſt, that diſmal Scene! Is it poſſible to remember it and queſtion his kindneſs, or deny him ours? Here here it is (my dear Friend) that we ſhould fix our moſt ſerious and ſolemn thoughts, *that Chriſt may dwell in our Hearts by Faith, and we may be rooted and grounded in Love,* Eph. 3. 17, 18, 19.

Love, comprehending with all the Saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height: and knowing the Love of Chriſt which paſſeth knowledge, that ſo we may be filled with all the fulneſs of God.

We ought alſo frequently to reflect on thoſe particular Tokens of Favour and Love, which God hath beſtowed on our ſelves, how long he hath born with our follies and ſins, and waited to be gracious unto us, wreſtling, as it were, with the ſtubbornneſs of our hearts, and eſſaying every method to reclaim us: We ſhould keep a regiſter in our Minds of all the eminent Bleſſings and Deliverances we have met with, ſome whereof have been ſo conveyed that we might clearly perceive they were not the iſſues of chance, but the gracious effects of the Divine Favour, and the ſignal returns of our Prayers. Nor ought we to imbitter the thoughts of theſe things with any harſh or unworthy ſuſpition, as if they were deſigned on purpoſe to enhaunce our guilt, and heighten our eternal Damnation, No, no, my Friend, God

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is Love, and he hath no pleaſure in the ruine of his Creatures: if they abuſe his goodneſs, and turn his grace into wantonneſs, and thereby plunge themſelves into the greater depth of guilt and miſery, this is the effect of their obſtinate wickedneſs, and not the deſign of thoſe benefits which he beſtowes.

If theſe conſiderations had once begotten in our hearts a real Love and Affection towards Almighty God, that will eaſily lead us unto the other Branches of Religion, and therefore I ſhall need ſay the leſs unto them.

To beget Charity, we muſt remember that all men are nearly related unto God.

We ſhall find our hearts inlarged in Charity towards men, by conſidering the relation wherein they ſtand unto God, and the impreſſes of his Image which are ſtamped upon them. They are not only his Creatures, the workmanſhip of his hands, but ſuch of whom he taketh ſpecial care, and for whom he hath a very dear and tender regard, having laid the deſigns of their happineſs before the foundations of the World, and being willing to live and converſe with them to all the Ages of

Eternity: The meaneſt and moſt contemptible perſon whom we behold is the off-ſpring of Heaven, one of the Children of the Moſt High; and however unworthily he might behave himſelf of that relation, ſo long as God hath not abdicated and diſowned him by a final Sentence, he will have us to acknowledge him as one of his, and as ſuch to embrace him with a ſincere and cordial affection. You know what a great concernment we are wont to have for thoſe that do any wayes belong to the perſon whom we love, how gladly we lay hold on every opportunity to gratifie the Child or Servant of a Friend; and ſure our Love towards God would as naturally ſpring forth in Charity towards men, did we mind the intereſt that he is pleaſed to take in them, and conſider that every Soul is dearer unto him, than all the material World; and that he did not account the Blood of his Son too great a price for their Redemption.

That they carry his Image upon them.

Again, as all men ſtand in a near relation to God, ſo they have ſtill ſo much of his Image ſtamped on them, as may

may oblige and excite us to love them: In ſome this Image is more Eminent and conſpicuous, and we can diſcern the Lovely Treats of Wiſdom and Goodneſs; and though in others it be miſerably ſullied and defaced, yet is it not altogether razed, ſome lineaments at leaſt do ſtill remain: All men are endued with Rational and Immortal Souls, with Underſtanding and Wills capable of the higheſt and moſt excellent things; and if they be at preſent diſordered and put out of tune by wickedneſs and folly, this may indeed move our compaſſion, but ought not in reaſon to extinguiſh our Love. When we ſee a perſon of a rugged humour and perverſe diſpoſition, full of Malice and Diſſimulation, very fooliſh and very proud, it is hard to fall in love with an object that preſents it ſelf unto us under an Idea ſo little grateful and lovely: but when we ſhall conſider theſe evil qualities as the Diſeaſes and Diſtempers of a Soul which in it ſelf is capable of all that wiſdom and goodneſs wherewith the beſt of Saints have ever been adorned, and which

may one day come to be raiſed unto ſuch heights of perfection as ſhall render it a fit companion for the holy Angels, this will turn our averſion into pity, and make us behold him with ſuch reſentments, as we ſhould have when we did look on a beautiful body that were mangled with wounds, or disfigured by ſome loathſome diſeaſe; and however we hate the vices, we ſhall not ceaſe to love the man.

To beget Purity, we ſhould conſider the Dignity of our Nature.

In the next place for purifying our Souls, and diſ-intangling our affections from the Pleaſures and Enjoyments of this lower life, let us frequently ponder the excellency and dignity of our Nature, and what a ſhameful and unworthy thing it is for ſo noble and divine a Creature as the Soul of Man, to be ſunk and immerſed in bruitiſh and ſenſual Luſts, or amuſed with airy and phantaſtical delights, and ſo to loſe the reliſh of ſolid and ſpiritual pleaſures, that the Beaſt ſhould be fed and pampered, and the Man and the Chriſtian be ſtarved in us. Did we but mind who we are, and for what we were made, this would teach us in a

right

right ſenſe to reverence and ſtand in awe of our ſelves, it would beget a holy modeſty and ſhamefacedneſs, and make us very ſhy and reſerved in the uſe of the moſt innocent and allowable pleaſures.

It will be very effectual to the ſame purpoſe, that we frequently raiſe our Minds toward Heaven, and repreſent to our thoughts thoſe Joyes that are at God's right hand, *thoſe pleaſures that endure for evermore; for every man that hath this hope in him purifieth himſelf even as he is pure.* If our Heavenly Country be much in our thoughts, it will make us as *ſtrangers and pilgrims to abſtain* from *fleſhly luſts which war againſt the Soul*, and keep our ſelves *unſpotted in this world*, that we may be fit for the enjoyments and felicities of the other. But then we muſt ſee that our Notions of Heaven be not groſs and carnal, that we dream not of a *Mahometan* Paradiſe, nor reſt on thoſe Metaphors and Similitudes by which theſe joys are ſometimes repreſented, for this might perhaps have a quite contrary effect, it might intangle us further in carnal

We ſhould meditate oft on the Joys of Heaven.

1 Joh. 3. 3.

affections, and we ſhould be ready to indulge our ſelves a very liberal foretaſte of thoſe pleaſures wherein we had placed our everlaſting felicity: but when we come once to conceive aright of thoſe Pure and Spiritual pleaſures, when the happineſs we propoſe to our ſelves is from the ſight and love and enjoyment of God, and our minds are filled with the hopes and forethoughts of that Bleſſed Eſtate, O how mean and contemptible will all things here below appear in our eyes? with what diſdain will we reject the groſs and muddy pleaſures, that would deprive us of thoſe Cœleſtial enjoyments, or any way unfit and indiſpoſe us for them.

Humility ariſeth from the conſideration of our failings.

The laſt Branch of Religion is *Humility*, and ſure we can never want matter of conſideration for begetting it: all our wickedneſſes and imperfections, all our follies and our ſins may help to pull down that fond and overweening conceipt which we are apt to entertain of our ſelves. That which makes any body eſteem us, is their knowledg or apprehenſion of ſome little

tle good, and their ignorance of a great deal of evil that may be in us: were they throughly acquainted with us, they would quickly change their opinion: The thoughts that pass in our heart in the best and most serious day of our life being exposed unto publick view, would render us either hateful or ridiculous: and now however we conceal our failings from one another, yet sure we are conscious to them our selves, and some serious reflections upon them, would much qualifie and allay the vanity of our spirits: Thus holy Men have come really to think worse of themselves, than of any other person in the world: not but that they knew that gross and scandalous Vices are in their nature more heynous than the surprisals of tentation and infirmity; but because they were much more intent on their own miscarriages, than on those of their Neighbours, and did consider all the aggravations of the one, and every thing that might be supposed to diminish and alleviate the other.

Thoughts of God, give us the loweſt thoughts of our ſelves.

But it is well obſerved by a Pious Writer, That the deepeſt and moſt pure Humility doth not ſo much ariſe from the conſideration of our own faults, and defects, as from a calm and quiet Contemplation of the Divine Purity and Goodneſs: Our ſpots never appear ſo clearly, as when we place them before this Infinite Light; and we never ſeem leſs in our own eyes, than when we look down upon our ſelves from on high: O how little, how nothing do all thoſe ſhadows of perfection then appear for which we are wont to value our ſelves! That humility which cometh from a view of our own ſinfulneſs and miſery, is more turbulent and boyſterous; but the other layeth us full as low, and wanteth nothing but that anguiſh and vexation wherewith our Souls are apt to boyl when they are the neareſt object of our thoughts.

Prayer another Inſtrument of Religion.

There remains yet another Mean for begetting a Holy and Religious diſpoſition in the Soul, and that is fervent and hearty Prayer. Holineſs is the Gift

Gift of God, indeed the greateſt gift he doth beſtow, or we are capable to receive, and he hath promiſed his holy Spirit to thoſe that ask it of him: in Prayer we make the neareſt approaches unto God, and lye open to the influences of Heaven: Then it is that the Sun of Righteouſneſs doth viſit us with directeſt rayes, and diſſipateth our darkneſs and imprinteth his Image on our Souls. I cannot now inſiſt on the advantages of this exerciſe, or the diſpoſitions wherewith it ought to be performed; and there is no need I ſhould, there being ſo many Books that Treat on this ſubject: I ſhall only tell you, That as there is one ſort of Prayer wherein we make uſe of the voice which is neceſſary in publick, and may ſometimes have its own advantages in private, and another wherein though we utter no ſound, yet we conceive the expreſſions and form the words, as it were, in our Mind, (which I preſume is moſt commonly uſed in private devotion) ſo there is a third and more ſublime kind of prayer, wherein the Soul takes a higher

The advantages of mental Prayer.

higher flight, and having collected all its forces by long and ſerious Meditation, it darteth it ſelf (ſo to ſpeak) towards God in ſighs and groans and thoughts too big for expreſſion: As when after a deep Contemplation of the Divine Perfections appearing in all his Works of Wonder, it addreſſeth it ſelf unto him in the profoundeſt adoration of his Majeſtie and Glory: or when after ſad reflections on its vileneſs and miſcarriages, it proſtrates it ſelf before him with the greateſt confuſion and ſorrow, not daring to lift up its eyes, or utter one word in his preſence: or when having well conſidered the beauty of holineſs, and the unſpeakable felicity of thoſe that are truly good, it panteth after God, and ſendeth up ſuch vigorous and ardent deſires as no words ſhould be ſufficient to expreſs, continuing and repeating each of theſe acts as long as it finds it ſelf upheld by the force and impulſe of the previous Meditation.

This mental Prayer is of all other the moſt effectual to purifie the Soul, and diſpoſe it unto a holy and religious temper,

temper, and may be termed the great Secret of Devotion, and one of the moſt powerful inſtruments of the Divine Life: and it may be the Apoſtle hath a peculiar reſpect unto it when he ſaith, that *the Spirit helpeth our infirmities, making interceſſion for us, with groanings that cannot be uttered, or*, as the Original may bear, *that cannot be worded:* Yet I do not ſo recommend this ſort of Prayer, as to ſuperſede the uſe of the other: for we have ſo many ſeveral things to pray for, and every petition of this nature, requireth ſo much time, and ſo great an intention of ſpirit, that it were not eaſie therein to overtake them all: to ſay nothing that the deep ſighs and heavings of the heart which are wont to accompany it, are ſomething oppreſſive to Nature, and make it hard to continue long in them. But certainly a few of thoſe inward aſpirations will do more than a great many fluent and melting expreſſions.

Thus (my dear Friend) I have briefly propoſed the Method which I judge proper

Religion is to be advanced by the same means by which it is begun, The use of the Holy Sacrament.

proper for moulding the Soul unto a holy frame; and the same means which serve to beget this Divine Temper, must still be practised for strengthning and advancing it: and therefore I shall recommend but one more for that purpose, and 'tis the frequent and conscientious use of that holy Sacrament, which is peculiarly appointed to nourish and increase the Spiritual Life, when once it is begotten in the Soul: All the Instruments of Religion do meet together in this Ordinance; and while we address our selves unto it, we are put to practise all the Rules which were mentioned before: Then it is, that we make the severest Survey of our Actions, and lay the strictest Obligations on our selves: Then are our Minds raised to the highest contempt of the World, and every Grace doth exercise it self with the greatest activity and vigour: all the subjects of Contemplation do there present themselves unto us with the greatest advantage; and then, if ever, doth the Soul make its most powerful Sally's towards Heaven, and assault it with a holy

a holy and acceptable force. And certainly the neglect or careleſs performance of this Duty, is one of the chief cauſes that bedwarfs our Religion, and makes us continue of ſo low a ſize.

But it is time I ſhould put a cloſe to this tedious Letter, which is grown to a far greater bulk then at firſt I intended: If theſe poor Papers can do you the ſmalleſt ſervice, I ſhall think my ſelf very happy in this Undertaking; at leaſt I am hopeful you will kindly accept the Sincere Endeavours of a Perſon who would fain acquit himſelf of ſome part of that which he owes you.

A Prayer.

AND now, O most gracious God, Father and Fountain of Mercy and Goodness, who hast blessed us with the Knowledge of our Happiness, and the way that leadeth unto it, excite in our Souls such ardent desires after the one, as may put us forth to the diligent prosecution of the other: Let us neither presume of our own strength, nor distrust thy Divine Assistance, but while we are doing our utmost endeavours, teach us still to depend on Thee for the success. Open our Eyes, O God, and teach us out of thy Law: Bless us with an exact and tender sense of our duty, and a taste to discern perverse things: O that our wayes were directed to keep thy Statutes, then shall we not be ashamed when we have respect unto all thy Commandments: Possess our hearts with a generous and holy disdain of all those poor enjoyments which this World holdeth

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out to allure us, that they may never be able to inveigle our Affections, or betray us unto any Sin: Turn away our eyes from beholding vanity, and quicken thou us in thy Law. Fill our Souls with such a deep ſenſe and full perſwaſion of thoſe great Truths which Thou haſt reveal'd in the Goſpel, as may influence and regulate our whole Converſation, and that the life which we henceforth live in the fleſh, we may live through Faith in the Son of God. O that the infinite Perfections of thy Bleſſed Nature, and the aſtoniſhing Expreſſions of thy Goodneſs and Love, may conquer and overpower our hearts, that they may be conſtantly ariſing towards Thee in flames of Devouteſt Affection, and inlarging themſelves in Sincere and Cordial Love towards all the World for thy ſake: and that we may cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of the fleſh and ſpirit, perfecting holineſs in thy fear, without which we can never hope to behold and enjoy Thee. Finally, O God, grant that the conſideration of what thou art, and what we our ſelves are, may both humble and lay us low before Thee, and alſo ſtir up in us the ſtrongeſt and moſt ardent

ardent aſpirations towards Thee. We deſire to reſign and give up our ſelves to the Conduct of thy Holy Spirit: lead us in thy Truth and teach us, for thou art the God of our Salvation: Guide us with thy Counſel, and afterwards receive us unto Glory: for the Merits and Interceſſion of thy Bleſſed Son our Saviour.

Amen.

FINIS.

AN ACCOUNT OF THE BEGINNINGS and ADVANCES OF A Spiritual Life.

Written at the Desire of *M. L. V. R.*